

**THE NEED FOR INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION DURING
INTERSTATE HIGHWAY MOVEMENT OF OVERSIZE LOADS
AND DIVERSION OF TRUCKS AROUND METROPOLITAN AREAS**

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Many situations and events result in freeway emergencies. They include events caused by man as well as those resulting from the forces of nature. Ideally, the best way to handle freeway emergencies is to prevent them from ever happening. This, of course, is not possible. But through Enforcement, Engineering, and Education ... the 3 E's ... we accomplish a great deal.

Effective traffic safety management demands a fluid working relationship between traffic engineers and law enforcers throughout all levels of the command structure. In a continuing effort to promote cooperative communications, I've agreed to cohost, along with the Ohio Department of Transportation, a Safety Conference for State Highway Engineers and Law Enforcement Officials this Spring (May 1-3) in Columbus, Ohio. The conference concept promotes cooperation and coordination between the two disciplines. About 15 states from the Midwest have been invited. The future of traffic safety management rests largely on the shoulders of engineers and enforcement officials. To be successful we must coordinate our work at all stages.

When we speak of freeway emergencies, images of fires, accidents and traffic congestion readily come to mind. These events can be as diverse and varied as a landslide or a traffic accident; a flood or a football game; a bridge collapse or a construction zone. Some of these situations are the results of planned events, such as construction zones and sporting events, while others are not, such as the forces of Mother Nature. Let us examine the management of a not so traditional freeway emergency; one which had no pre-planning and no inter-agency communication before the event occurred.

IS-75 Truck Ban - Kentucky

On Tuesday, July 8, 1986, the governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky issued an executive order prohibiting northbound commercial truck traffic travelling through the Greater Cincinnati metropolitan area from using a 6-mile stretch of Kentucky Interstates 71 and 75 just south of the Ohio River. All affected tractor-trailers were rerouted onto Interstate 275, bypassing the City of Cincinnati. This order occurred a week after a fatal crash involving a commercial vehicle in an area known as Death Hill.

I wish to point out that I am not here to criticize the Kentucky governor's unilateral action. I will let history determine if the timing of the executive order was correct. There are times when circumstances dictate that swift and decisive action is necessary to alleviate a problem -- or -- to focus attention on a prolonged hazardous situation.

Let us direct our attention, however, to the effect of this event and the proper management of this freeway emergency. Ohio officials, including the Highway Patrol, were not informed of the truck ban until the day it took effect, the same day that detour signs were

erected in Kentucky. As a result, we took several immediate steps to counter what resulted in a 300% increase in truck traffic on IS-275.

1. Patrol hours in the affected area were doubled.
2. Our portable truck scales team was assigned to the area on a regular basis.
3. Air speed enforcement was increased.
4. Statistics and results of our efforts were provided to the media. A newspaper reporter was permitted to accompany one of our troopers on patrol.
5. Weekly activity reports were initiated.

While we were increasing our visibility and impact on the interstate, citizens and local officials were also reacting to the diversion of truck traffic. IS-275 is an 84 mile interstate circling the City of Cincinnati, and travels through three states and numerous municipalities. While Cincinnati and other centrally located cities were supportive of the truck ban, the suburban communities raised a hue and cry that the detouring of trucks would endanger their communities. They argued that speeding would increase as drivers attempted to make up for lost time; and that traffic accidents would increase, especially those involving hazardous materials, endangering their communities. This pressure was directed not only at the Governor of Kentucky, but also the State of Ohio.

This pitting of the inner city interests against the suburban community concerns made the truck ban a very controversial issue. Of paramount interest was the increase in hazardous materials moving through the suburban communities. Small suburban communities and rural fire departments felt they couldn't handle a significant freeway emergency because they were not adequately trained or equipped to deal with a hazardous materials incident. They argued that advance notice could have permitted pre-planning for truck traffic diversion through their community. City officials would have had an opportunity to reallocate their resources. Having time to train and equip their emergency response forces could have alleviated some of their concerns.

The Ohio Department of Transportation had construction projects in progress on IS-275 which affected the flow of traffic. As a result of the truck ban on IS-75 and IS-71, ODOT planners had to reexamine their construction and highway maintenance plans.

Since the diversion of trucks began, there have been public hearings, task forces established and in-depth studies initiated by agencies at the local, state and federal levels. The Highway Patrol has actively participated in many of these studies and meetings. We feel that overall successful management of this situation has depended upon:

1. Inter-agency cooperation and communication.
2. Knowing other decision makers on a one-on-one basis.
3. Understanding other agencies' needs, philosophies, and objectives.

4. Communicating the Highway Patrol's commitment to provide the resources necessary to ensure safety on the highways.

Given the opportunity to conduct some planning and evaluating of our resources, we initiated certain strategies:

1. We scheduled a four man tactical squad to work 12 hour enforcement shifts Monday - Friday.
2. We increased our airspeed checks to at least one per day. We also supplemented our painted airspeed lines with use of our aircraft VASCAR units. One aircraft can utilize troopers located in multiple zones, thus impacting more traffic.
3. We involved deputy sheriffs as ground units in our airspeed enforcement. This extends the effectiveness of our aircraft. And it promotes inter-agency cooperation between law enforcement agencies to impact a problem that could be perceived as solely a Highway Patrol responsibility.
4. We have cooperated with the PUCO Enforcement Division to schedule their inspectors with our portable scales team to work together at a closed rest area along IS-275.
5. We initiated contact with the State Fire Marshal's Hazardous Material Response Teams, to provide training for local agencies. The State Fire Marshal has located Emergency Response Units strategically at several of our posts throughout the state. One is located off IS-71 just north of IS-275.

Currently we are awaiting a Federal Highway Administration decision on the continued diversion of truck traffic until highway reconstruction of the affected area is completed. This decision is due next month.

This example of a not-so-traditional freeway emergency underscores the need for pre-planning. Traffic management is a system involving many disciplines from both the public and private sectors. The actions of one government agency, large or small, can have far-ranging implications for other states, regions, or municipalities. No longer can each political subdivision manage its own traffic problems internally without influencing its neighbor's traffic patterns.

In Columbus, Ohio a city ordinance has resulted in the diversion of all thru hazardous loads around Columbus on IS-270. Lack of inter-agency cooperation and communication contributed to the delay in implementation of this ordinance until a semi carrying liquid hydrogen overturned at the IS-70 / IS-71 interchange near downtown Columbus. This freeway emergency, which paralyzed traffic for many hours, sparked much activity and media attention. This resulted in the cutting of red tape and the posting of interstate signs diverting hazardous materials onto IS-270 around Columbus.

We in the Patrol believe strongly in the "systems" approach to problem solving; and see clearly that to achieve our traffic safety objectives requires close inter-agency communication and coordination.

Oversize Movements - Mansfield

Now let's turn to an example of what I feel is excellent pre-planning of an unusual event.

In 1985 the Ohio Department of Transportation advised us of an upcoming series of movements of oversized machinery. These so-called "Superloads" would depart from the Port of Cleveland for a General Motors stamping plant near Mansfield, Ohio, and were segments of computer-operated, high-speed stamping presses which were up to 14 feet high and 140 feet long. They weighed between 200,000 and 600,000 pounds and some approached 25 feet in width, more than the width of the two lanes of interstate highway over which they would travel. These huge presses had traveled across the Pacific Ocean from Japan, through the Panama Canal, and up the Atlantic Coast before reaching the Port of Cleveland by way of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Before the first press was unloaded, a planning session was scheduled. Attending the meeting were the Department of Transportation, the Highway Patrol, the City of Cleveland, the contracted trucking company, and the engineering firm that was to install the presses at the GM facility.

The objective of the planning session was to coordinate the safe movement of the machinery with a minimum of inconvenience to the motorists who use busy Interstate 71 and Cleveland city streets.

During the planning sessions, a system of inter-agency communications and emergency procedures were developed. Of particular importance to us was a pre-move public information program to provide advance notification of the move to the hundreds of thousands of motorists who daily use the interstate system to commute to and from Cleveland. Motorists' attitude and knowledge of the reason for the congestion was extremely important to the safe management of affected traffic.

Just before the first shipment moved out from the Ninth Street pier, the Director of Highway Safety conducted a news conference in Cleveland. The public was informed of the impending move and the precautions that were being taken for their safety. The first shipment began shortly after the morning rush hour. Subsequent shipments were scheduled during both the day and night. The hauling vehicle was as long as four semitrailers coupled together. To the rear were several smaller trucks carrying lighted, programmable signs. These signs were positioned at intervals to warn approaching motorists of the slow moving vehicles ahead. Initially, Cleveland Police escorted the convoy through their city. Off-duty troopers were then employed to escort the convoy the remaining distance to Mansfield. The State of Ohio was reimbursed for the use of the patrol cars, and off-duty troopers were paid directly by the trucking company.

It took about 12 hours for the convoy to make the 98 mile trip. Contributing to the expected traffic congestion was a provision in the special hauling permit to reduce speed to five miles per hour upon crossing any bridge. There are over 45 bridges to cross and each load was required to come to a complete stop before starting across each bridge. Except when crossing bridges, one lane of traffic was permitted to pass the convoy by using the berm. There were

several stops scheduled along the route to allow any traffic buildup to clear. These stops were usually made at an interchange exit ramp to give traffic the widest pavement available to pass. This practice also reduced the possibility of interchange congestion. Once traffic cleared, the load resumed its slow journey to Mansfield.

Communication between the trucking company, the Highway Patrol, and the Department of Transportation was maintained with CB radios. The radio proved to be especially effective when it was necessary to restrict traffic as the convoy inched its way over the numerous bridges. Incidentally, citizen band radio traffic was especially complimentary about the manner in which the movements were made. There was none of the usual criticism that results from freeway congestion.

Since the convoy would be on the highway for almost 12 hours, it was important to keep motorists aware of their location. Periodically, we would notify local radio and television stations of the progress so they could provide their audiences with the most current and accurate traffic reports. These progress reports were particularly well received both by the media and local motorists. And curious spectators did not create a serious traffic problem.

After the first oversize movement was completed, the participating agencies met to critique their performance. Recommendations were made to improve operations. It has been difficult to identify any significant shortcomings in the oversized shipment plan. Motorists were delayed no more than 10 - 20 minutes. Subsequent moves were just as safely completed. No traffic accidents resulted from any of these shipments.

From October 1985 through July 1987 there were 113 loads transported in this manner, the largest of which was 286 tons (572,850 pounds). Almost 10,000 tons (19,490,000 pounds) made the 98 mile trip without a major incident. The only incident was a flat tire on the very first load.

Ohio has experienced a dramatic increase in these so-called "Superloads" traveling into and through our state. During 1986 there were 156 superload permits issued. That increased 84% in 1987 to 287 permits. This underscores the increasing need for inter-agency communication and cooperation.

Summary

As traffic safety professionals, we are expected to perform our responsibilities in a safe, efficient and effective manner. Pre-event planning helps us maximize our inter-agency cooperation and task performance. The Ohio State Highway Patrol is a strong believer in the "systems" approach to problem solving, especially when field operations and traffic safety are involved. To achieve true success in the management of a freeway emergency, decision makers from the involved agencies must get to know each other one-on-one. That way, they can better understand each others' problems and capabilities. Only then can they fine tune their relationships, and chart parallel courses to achieve an objective. Waiting until an emergency occurs is too late to begin communicating with other emergency response personnel and to coordinate your response plans with theirs.