

Emergency Operations and Incident Response

An “emergency” is defined in ORS 401.025 and in Section 1.3.2 of the ODOT *Emergency Operations Plan* as:

“...any man-made or natural event or circumstance causing or threatening loss of life, injury to person or property, human suffering or financial loss, and includes, but is not limited to fire, explosion, flood, severe weather, drought, earthquake, volcanic activity, spills or release of oil or hazardous material as defined in ORS 466.605, contamination, utility or transportation emergencies, disease, blight, infestation, crisis influx of migrants unmanageable by the county, civil disturbance, riot, sabotage and war.”

An “incident” may result from some of the causes for an emergency or from other causes, but an “incident” is generally a short duration event of a localized nature. Incidents include:

- Crashes on the roadway that involve vehicles and/or pedestrians or bicyclists.
- Disabled vehicles.
- Obstacles or debris on the roadway.
- Spilled cargo or material, including hazardous material.
- Other situations that affect normal traffic flow or pose a hazard to motorists or persons or property on or adjacent to the roadway.

ODOT response to an emergency or incident is addressed in the publications listed in the following discussion.

Emergency

The ODOT Emergency Preparedness Committee and the Statewide Emergency Operations Manager, located in the Office of Maintenance, have prepared and published the ODOT *Emergency Operations Plan*. The *Emergency Operations Plan*:

- Establishes ODOT’s emergency response policy.
- Provides for a coordinated response with other state, federal, local, tribal, private, or other agencies or jurisdictions.
- Describes actions of ODOT in responding to an emergency.
- Describes emergency response roles of units within ODOT.
- Describes ODOT emergency response equipment, facilities, and resources.
- Describes actions to maintain preparedness for an emergency.

The Region Manager, District Manager, and Transportation Maintenance Manager must be familiar with their responsibilities in the event of an emergency. Those include, but are not limited to:

- Designating the Region representative on the Emergency Preparedness Committee.
- Developing and maintaining an organization chart for response to an emergency.
- Designating and equipping a location to be used as a Region or District Emergency Operations Center.
- Participating in emergency exercises.
- Assuring that appropriate persons are properly trained to respond to an emergency.

- Identifying, and coordinating with, key contact persons from other agencies.
- Maintaining an availability of, or adequate stock of, supplies potentially needed to respond to an emergency.
- Developing and maintaining a listing of contractors that could assist with repairs made necessary by an emergency condition.

Refer to the ODOT *Emergency Operations Plan* for further information.

Incident

The Emergency Preparedness Committee, of the Office of Maintenance, has published the *Employee Guide to Highway Incidents and Hazardous Material Response*. Each maintenance vehicle should carry a copy of that publication as well as the *Emergency Response Guidebook*.

The *Employee Guide to Highway Incidents and Hazardous Material Response*:

- Specifies the primary responsibilities of ODOT personnel at an incident scene.
- Defines ODOT's mission regarding incident response.
- Provides guidance and direction to ODOT employees who respond to incidents on State highways.

The *Emergency Response Guidebook*:

- Provides guidance for identifying the material involved in a hazardous materials incident.
- Identifies hazards and initial actions to protect ODOT employees and others.

All maintenance personnel should be knowledgeable about those two publications and should receive appropriate training.

Employee response to an incident is generally included in either of the following two situations:

1. When requested by the District or Region Manager, the Transportation Maintenance Manager, Transportation Operations Center (TOC), law enforcement agency, or emergency response agency, the employee must perform ODOT's primary responsibilities (i.e.: traffic control, response to highway damage and non-hazardous cleanup, ODOT's incident investigation) at the incident scene.
2. If an employee has not received such a request but encounters an incident, such as a crash or a disabled vehicle, the employee may use discretion in determining whether or not to provide assistance. Considerations include:
 - Not placing themselves in jeopardy, if the incident could involve physical violence. In that case, the employee should report the situation to the TOC for assistance from the local law enforcement agency and notification of the District Manager and Transportation Maintenance Manager.
 - Before providing assistance, report the license number of the involved vehicle and the apparent situation to the TOC.

- If the incident involves either damage to ODOT property or a situation where lives may be in danger due to illness or injury, either:
 - Stop to assist and report needed information to the TOC.
 - Request assistance, as needed, from the Transportation Maintenance Manager or District Manager.
 - Report the situation to the TOC to request assistance from the law enforcement or other emergency agency.
- If other assistance is available nearby or if the involved persons appear to have the situation in control, ODOT may not need to assist unless the interests of ODOT are in question or involved.
- If the persons involved in the incident do not appear to have the situation in control, ODOT may offer to help acquire the services of a tow truck or other assistance. Contact the TOC to report the situation and request assistance.

In general, ODOT employees, other than incident response employees, should not perform tire service or repair, vehicle repairs, tow services, or other vehicle maintenance. An employee may provide assistance, in an emergency, to remove the vehicle from the traveled way to prevent crashes or if the vehicle occupants may have physical difficulty in performing the minor tasks and the needed service will not be available for several hours. If an employee performs such services, the employee should be aware that the employee, not ODOT, could be responsible for other damages that the vehicle owner or occupants claim to have been caused by the provided services.

Under specific situations, ODOT personnel must obtain the approval of the District Manager or Region Manager or their designated representative before moving vehicles and other material from the highway to restore traffic flow. Refer to Highway Clearing Guidelines below and Oregon Administrative Rule 734-020-0145.

When responding to an incident, the employee should:

- Provide advance warning to traffic of a crash or other situation that impacts traffic.
- Place flares and other traffic control devices, or perform flagging duties, to help guide traffic around a crash or other situation.
- For a crash, provide assistance to the motorist and involved law enforcement or emergency response agencies, including notifying those agencies through the TOC.

See other discussion and guidance in the *Employee Guide to Highway Incidents and Hazardous Material Response* document. Report incidents to the TOC.

Some Regions or Districts have designated specific vehicles for use in responding to incidents. Those vehicles may be named “COMET” or “ODOT Emergency Response Vehicle”.

Such designated vehicles should be properly equipped to respond to most incidents, including the following equipment or supplies:

- The operator of the ODOT vehicle, and any passengers that will not remain in the vehicle, must have proper apparel, including safety vest or proper color clothing and appropriate soft cap or hard hat.
- Rotobeam (may also use emergency warning lights, if approved by the ODOT Director as requested by the Region Manager).
- ODOT radio and ODOT *Radio Communications Handbook*.
- *Employee Guide to Highway Incidents and Hazardous Material Response*, including key telephone numbers.
- *Emergency Response Guidebook*.
- Flares and/or cones.
- First aid kit, medic first aid pocket reference manual, and personal protection barrier kit (gloves and face shield).
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- Shovel.
- Broom.
- “Stop/Slow” sign (handheld).
- Two 48-inch “Wreck Ahead” signs with supports.
- Absorbent material to control spills of small amounts of petroleum products.
- Fire Extinguisher.
- Digital Camera.
- Paper and pen or pencil to record needed information.

Because of the additional assistance abilities, these designated incident response vehicles also may include:

- Cellular telephone.
- Push bumper.
- Device to dispense small amounts of fuel.

ODOT may operate designated incident response vehicles during periods of high traffic volumes in the service area. The vehicles, and their trained operators, may provide other assistance including:

- Assisting motorists in routine emergencies, including requesting a tow truck, assisting with minor repairs, or dispensing small amounts of fuel.
- Providing information to maintenance employees about road or traffic conditions or situations that may need attention.
- Providing information to the TOC about road or traffic conditions, especially that information needed to post on the TripCheck website or activate on variable message signboards.

ODOT may operate other incident response vehicles only during specific periods of high traffic volumes, such as holiday periods.

Highway Clearing Guidelines

Unless a incident area has been deemed a crime scene, use the following guidelines in determining whether to remove vehicles or materials, that are obstructing or have

closed the roadway to traffic, from the roadway to restore traffic flow rather than waiting for commercial or other tow vehicles to clear the roadway. If deemed a crime scene, follow the directions of the law enforcement agency.

The intent of these guidelines is to minimize delays because of vehicle-caused obstruction or closure of the highway.

It is preferred that commercial tow vehicles, or the owners of the vehicle(s) involved in a crash or incident, remove the involved vehicle(s) or other materials if further damage could result from moving them.

ODOT personnel may assist in moving an obstructing vehicle(s) or other materials from the roadway if the owner agrees and if the vehicle(s) or materials will not be further damaged by the action. The ODOT personnel do not need to obtain approval of the District Manager or other authority, but should report the activity to the TOC.

If the roadway is closed or traffic flow is seriously obstructed and

- Commercial tow vehicles or the owners cannot remove the vehicle(s) or other materials in a timely manner (generally 30 minutes or less dependent on traffic conditions),
- The vehicle(s) or materials may be further damaged by movement, or
- The owners will not agree to having ODOT personnel remove the obstructing vehicle(s) or materials,

ODOT may take action to clear the roadway and reestablish traffic flow. Refer to Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 734-020-0145.

1. Before requesting approval from the District Manager or other proper authority or starting to remove the obstructing vehicle(s) or materials, assure that:
 - There are no serious injury(s) or fatality(s).
 - There are no hazardous materials that are not properly contained.
 - Appropriate ODOT equipment and other resources are available to remove the obstructing vehicle(s) or materials.
2. The responsible Maintenance employee at the scene should contact the District Manager or Assistant District Manager and obtain their approval before removing the obstructing vehicle(s) or materials. If neither the District Manager nor the Assistant District Manager is available, contact the Region Manager or designated representative. The authority to clear a highway is included in OAR 734-020-0145.
3. After receiving the approval to clear the roadway with ODOT equipment and personnel, the responsible Maintenance employee at the scene should update the District Manager or other approving authority of the status of the operation every ½ hour, including when the roadway has been cleared and traffic has been restored. Also notify the TOC when the roadway has been cleared.

4. If all of the conditions in Item 1 above cannot be met or there is any other questionable issue, wait for the Oregon State Police or other responsible responding law enforcement agency to assess the situation and determine the party to remove the obstructing vehicle(s) or materials. Consider the following and other issues in that assessment:
 - Location.
 - Traffic volumes.
 - Availability of detour routes.
 - Potential risk of damage to the vehicle(s) or materials to be removed.
 - Time of day.
 - Weather conditions.
5. When removing obstructing vehicle(s) or materials with ODOT equipment and personnel, exercise maximum care to avoid damage to the vehicle(s) or materials being removed. As much as possible, leave the removed vehicle(s) or materials in a location where they may be further removed safely.

After clearing the roadway with ODOT equipment and personnel, the Transportation Maintenance Manager and the District Manager may evaluate the highway clearing process or procedures to improve the process or procedures for future occurrences.

Supplies in Vehicles for Controlling Spills

Refer to the discussion in the Equipment section of this Guide on this subject.

Because of limited space in vehicles to carry items, few ODOT vehicles will carry supplies needed to control spills. If the operator of an ODOT encounters a spill situation, the operator should contact the TOC to report the incident and request assistance. If employees are certified to plug and patch and if appropriate supplies are available, employees may contain leaking operating fluids.

Dead or Injured Animals

Vehicles frequently hit animals on the roadway, either killing or injuring the animal. Refer to the ODOT practice on dealing with dead or injured animals in Activity 134 of the Roadside and Vegetation Activities section of this Guide.

Abandoned Vehicles

If a vehicle appears to have been abandoned along the roadway, provide information on the vehicle and situation to the TOC. The TOC will obtain information through the law enforcement data system (LEDS). If the vehicle was reported stolen TOC will notify local law enforcement, otherwise a tracking code will be assigned to the incident and conveyed to the maintenance employee. The tracking code is to be included on the orange notification tag that is placed on the vehicle. If the vehicle has not been removed when the notification time has expired, the maintenance crew should call the TOC to request the vehicle be towed.

If the vehicle poses a hazard to traffic as defined in ORS 819.120, provide that information to the TOC and request a non-preference hazard tow to have the vehicle moved or removed as soon as possible. Generally, ODOT should not move such a vehicle with its own equipment.

Reporting of Incidents and Crashes

The TOC serves as a clearinghouse for requests and information and records information on incidents and crashes that occur on the State Highway system.

The Transportation Maintenance Manager should assure that:

- Maintenance workers report information to the TOC if they see, respond to, or assist with a crash or incident.
- The TOC is provided with proper, accurate information to be recorded.
- ODOT appropriately investigates designated crashes or incidents, especially if ODOT may have some liability or if multiple crashes or incidents occurred near the same location.

See further discussion, regarding the TOC, in the Organization section and the Public Relations section of this Guide.

If an ODOT employee is injured or an ODOT vehicle is damaged, refer to discussion in the Safety section and the Crashes, Injuries, and Damage to Property section of this Guide. If an employee is fatally injured, refer to guidelines in the Fatalities in the Workplace document located in Annex R of the ODOT *Emergency Operations Plan*.

Transporting Occupants of Disabled Vehicles

Maintenance employees may transport occupants of disabled vehicles to the nearest shelter or safe location such as a service station, restaurant, or convenience store, in situations where in the employee's opinion a danger exists to the occupants of the disabled vehicle if the action is not taken. Before transporting, notify the TOC of the disabled vehicle license number, the names and addresses of the people being transported, the destination and the state vehicle mileage. When the destination is reached, notify the TOC and provide the state vehicle ending mileage. The driver and any passengers in a state vehicle must wear proper safety restrains as required by law and discussed in the *Fleet Guidelines Manual*.

Damage to ODOT Property

Since ODOT generally tries to recover costs of repairs and needed traffic control or cleanup from the responsible or involved parties, the Transportation Maintenance Manager must record all information about costs incurred as a result of crashes or incidents. As soon as feasible, assure that ODOT establishes a Claim Against Others (CAO) expenditure account under which to record the costs of repair. Refer to the Crashes, Injuries, and Damage to Property section of this Guide for the procedure.

If the roadway or roadway facilities are damaged from a crash or other incident, the Transportation Maintenance Manager should assure the damage is at least temporarily repaired to make the roadway acceptably safe for traffic.

As soon as feasible, the Transportation Maintenance Manager must assure that the damage, resulting from a crash or incident, is adequately repaired to minimize ODOT's liability for damages, injuries, etc. that result from the damage not being repaired. Record all information about costs into the accounting system and the Automated Time Card (ATC) system using the appropriate expenditure information. Notify the District Manager, who will notify the MMS Unit, so that ODOT can bill the responsible parties for the costs incurred for the repairs.

Also refer to discussion in the Reporting of Work and Costs section of the *Maintenance Field Operations Manual*.

Emergency Repair of Roads and Bridges

Refer to discussion in Section 1.3.3 of the *Emergency Operations Plan*. Also consider:

- ODOT Subdelegation Order SUB-11 allows the State Maintenance Engineer to declare an emergency to accomplish emergency repairs without calling for competitive bids for the repair work.
- If the Governor declares an emergency, ODOT may seek Emergency Relief (ER) funds from the Federal Highway Administration to pay for most or all costs to repair damage to Federal-aid highways that was caused by the emergency event.
- If the President declares an emergency, ODOT may seek Disaster Assistance funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to pay for most or all costs to repair damage to any highway damaged by the emergency event.

The Emergency Operations Manager in the Office of Maintenance is ODOT's liaison regarding ER or FEMA funds.