Winter Weather Pileups

On December 8, 2013, agencies across southeast Wisconsin went from an average Sunday morning to an unprecedented number of large scale incidents. The morning’s initial quiet burgeoned to cars spinning out of control by the hundreds.

“It went from nothing happening to an overwhelming number of calls immediately,” described Menomonee Falls Police Sergeant Steve Rudie. “It was like flipping a switch.”

The first crash happened at 10 a.m. in Racine County. An hour later, Milwaukee County saw two more crashes. At approximately 11:30 am, four more incidents happened in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha Counties. The last incident happened in Waukesha just after noon. The total of all eight incidents resulted in 338 vehicles involved, 107 persons injured, and four fatalities. Sergeant Rudie says that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

“As we talk about these eight major incidents, we lose sight of the real scope of what was going on out there. Those were a few incidents in the grand scheme of what was taking place. The entire scope was so much bigger than that. I’ve been here for 18 years and I’ve never seen anything like it,” said Sergeant Rudie. (Continued Page 2)

TIME PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

Traffic Incident Management Community,

I hope everyone had a happy and safe holiday season. Now that the holidays have passed, it’s time for the TIME Program to really start to “ramp up.” The 2014 schedule for all of the TIME meetings throughout the state has been set and sent out. We are in the process of getting some of the TIME-related brochures and handouts, e.g. the Flip Book, Steer-it/Clear-it, Visor Cards, etc… updated and available for distribution. We have also attended a couple of training conferences hosted by TIME Coalition member associations including WI EMS Association, WI Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association and the WI Chiefs of Police. As you can see, it has been a busy January.

At all of the conferences, the TIME Program has been very well received. Showing the “best of” crash videos really helped to bring attendees to the table. While at the conferences, I was able to speak with a number of first responders about the importance of utilizing TIM protocols at crash scenes.

As a result, I received a number of requests for TIM training from various agencies across the state. The more we train, the safer our roads will be for everyone. I will continue my outreach to all agencies and/or businesses that work at crash scenes on our roadways. We all must remain vigilant at all times to the activities that are occurring around us when we are at crash scenes. (Continued Page 7)
The forecast that day called for just a few inches of snow, something that usually doesn’t faze Wisconsin drivers. However, it was the first big snow of the year, combined with poor visibility and a high number of out of town drivers. Germantown Fire Department Captain Matt Karpinski says it was all of these factors that led to the high volume of incidents.

Referring to the now viral video of the crash at Lannon Road, Captain Karpinski says it’s evident that drivers were taken by surprise. “They were obviously driving too fast for conditions, but they had no idea what was happening in front.”

More than two dozen agencies across WisDOT’s Southeast Region sprang into action, including: law enforcement, fire departments, towing providers, county highway departments, and representatives from WisDOT. They worked for hours in inclement conditions to clear the huge pileups and to aid a large number of victims.

Sergeant Wendy Younglove with the Department of State Patrol said she had to drive the wrong way up Highway 20 just to reach a major crash in Racine County. “It was challenging to find out if it was one big crash or several others. We had people who were still trapped in vehicles, but we could not get them out of their cars,” she said. “We figured that from mile post 328 to 333 we had 23 incidents, and the total number of vehicles involved was about 91.

The sheer volume of crashes amidst the conditions created many issues for first responders and those coordinating behind the scenes. These issues revolved mainly around the availability of resources. Captain Karpinski said it was difficult just to get help for the injured.

“We had initially called out for a level-four box alarm, which normally get us 22 ambulances. Out of those, we only received nine, because everyone else was already busy with all of the other incidents,” said Captain Karpinski.

In order to examine the best practices and lessons learned during these incidents, Wisconsin’s TIME Program Manager Dave Spakowicz hosted two After Action Reviews (AARs) of the incidents. One review focused on the incidents in the southern part of the region, while the other focused on incidents in the northern part. The AARs hosted conversations to find out what went right and to help identify gaps that could be filled in the future.

“One of the things I credit with our success is the Emergency Transportation Operations (ETO) training we had weeks earlier,” said Sergeant Rudie, referencing an exercise facilitated between the TIME and ETO Programs last fall.

“The winter preparedness with police and fire targeted a big portion of what we had going on here. I had it in mind that day,” Sergeant Rudie added. He said the Fall ETO exercise helped shore up the response management principles that are highlighted in the Wisconsin TIME Program. (Continued Page 7)

STOC Highlight: Help During the Storm

When there were hundreds of pileups on Wisconsin roads on December 8, the Statewide Traffic Operations Center (STOC) was busy aiding first responders.

In anticipation of the Green Bay Packers game and the inclement weather that was happening that day, the STOC put Dynamic Message Sign (DMS) warnings into effect along I-43 Southbound and US 41 Southbound in advance of the game. (Continued Page 6)
New TIME Coalition Website Now Live!

Wisconsin responders have a host of new tools at their finger tips, as the TIME Coalition unveils its new website.

New features of the website include:
- A new calendar that partner agencies can use to share their TIME-relevant events;
- An online forum that will allow agencies to participate in statewide conversations about TIME-related topics;
- An online repository that will allow the TIME Program and partner agencies to share documents, presentations, videos, and other types of digital files.

The new site will continue to feature all of the news updates, schedule information, training information and partner resources that were available on the old website. For more information, email us at timeprogram@dot.wi.gov.

Head to http://www.wisconsintimecoalition.org/ to check out these new website features.

New Faces

Gene Oldenburg
ETO Program Manager
Gene Oldenburg is the new ETO Program Manager. He will utilize his extensive law enforcement background to aid the state in ETO planning.

Gene spent 32 years with the West Milwaukee Police Department, including 17 years as police chief.

Gene also served as the Southeast Regional Interoperability Coordinator for eight counties since 2010, and authored Wisconsin’s “Recommended Public Safety Radio Channel Naming Standards.”

Dennis Drazkowski concluded his two-year tenure as ETO program manager at the end of December.

Many thanks to Dennis, and his hard work expanding the capabilities of the ETO program. Best wishes to him as he moves closer to his retirement dreams.

Marquis Young
TIME Engineer
Marquis Young joins the TIME Program as the new Traffic Incident Management Engineer. Marquis holds Bachelor of Science degrees in Mathematics and Civil Engineering.

As the TIME Engineer, Marquis provides technical support for the TIME and ETO programs. He also leads and develops the design and implementation of emergency alternate routes for the state highway system.

Marquis is no stranger to WisDOT, having worked three summers as a Student Engineer Training (SET) intern in the SW region. His experience includes over five years of work as a design engineer and utility coordinator in the private sector. Some of Marquis’ project experience includes WIS 29/US 41 in Green Bay and US 12 in Ft. Atkinson. Recently, Marquis worked as a Contract Support Engineer for AT&T.

SAVE THE DATE

The 40th Annual Governor’s Conference on Highway Safety
August 27-28, 2014
Pre-Conference Training
August 26
KI Convention Center,
Green Bay WI

This summer join traffic safety experts and advocates from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines at the 40th Annual Governor’s Conference on Highway Safety.

The TIME Program will host a variety of workshops to appeal to all of its partners, including: EMS, fire, law enforcement, public safety communications, towing and recovery, emergency management, and transportation specialists.

More details will be announced soon.
TIME Newsletter

Fall ETO Exercises

This fall, the TIME Program teamed up with the Emergency Traffic Operations (ETO) Program to present the annual winter weather preparedness tabletop exercises.

The exercises focused on winter weather preparedness and gave participants in each of WisDOT’s five regions the opportunity to evaluate current communication and coordination capabilities during a severe winter storm scenario.

During the exercise, the December 2012 blizzard was used as a backdrop to facilitate discussion relating to what resources and capabilities everyone had available.

New this year, invitations were extended to WisDOT’s partner agencies, including: county highway commissioners; local law enforcement and fire; EMS; emergency management directors; the Wisconsin National Guard; and towing companies. The invitations were well received, providing attendees with the chance to network with agencies who normally do not participate in tabletop exercises together.

As a result of attending the regional sessions, Wisconsin National Guard requested a specialized training session held only for Guard personnel. That training session was held in December.

Currently, the ETO Program is in the process of scheduling its spring training sessions.

2013 Deer-Vehicle Collisions (DVC) In Wisconsin

Wisconsin ranks seventh among U.S. states for the likelihood of deer-vehicle collisions (DVC), according to a new survey by State Farm Insurance. Annually, over 20,000 deer are salvaged with permits or removed from roadways by Wisconsin DNR contractors. The majority of those deer-vehicle collisions occurred within Dane and Shawano counties.

Using insurance claims data and state licensed driver counts from the Federal Highway Administration, State Farm projected that one of every 78.7 Wisconsin motorists will hit a deer in the coming year.

A deer-vehicle collision occurs when one or more deer and a human-operated vehicle collide on a roadway. It can result in deer fatality, property damage, and human injury and/or death. In 2000, of the 6.1 million lightweight motor vehicle collisions reported in the US, 247,000 crashes involved animal-vehicle collisions.

Deer-vehicle collisions lead to about 200 human deaths and $1.1 billion in property damage every year. State and federal government, insurance companies and drivers spend an additional $3 billion in effort to reduce and manage the increasing number of deer-vehicle collisions.

In 2013, nearly 13,000 deer-vehicle collisions were reported throughout the state of Wisconsin. Each incident involved an average of about $3,500 in property damage. Over 300 people were injured in those traffic incidents, and seven motorists were killed.

In Wisconsin, mating season (October and November) is when DVCs are most likely, especially at night and early morning. May and June are the months when newborns emerge from the forest, many of which wander into the path of oncoming traffic.

Avoiding DVCs:

- Deer generally travel in herds, so if you see one, there’s a good chance more are nearby.
- Deer are most active between 6 and 9 PM.
- Don’t rely on car-mounted deer whistles.
- Use high-beam headlights whenever possible to better illuminate areas from which deer could emerge onto the roadway.
- If a collision is imminent, do not swerve. Losing control of a vehicle can be much more hazardous than a collision with a deer.
Cheese brine added to road salt

A Public Works employee shows off a sample of cheese brine

You may notice the faint aroma of mozzarella in the air as road crews thaw freezing streets and highways this year.

Several highway departments throughout the state of Wisconsin are now mixing cheese brine with road salt when applied to roads in the winter. This filtered dairy waste used as a wetting agent enhances the effectiveness of road salt while potentially reducing long-term negative effects on the natural environment. The donated mozzarella brine comes from a cheese plant in Dresser, Wisconsin.

The city of Milwaukee recently experimented with the mix in its Bay View neighborhood. Several other Wisconsin communities are now experimenting with mixing cheese brine with road salt in hopes of reducing the salt’s environmental impact and increasing the duration of product effectiveness.

By pre-wetting the salt with cheese brine, an additional 25 to 30 percent of the salt stays in contact with the roadway surface. That directly translates into less salt bouncing off of the pavement. Therefore, less salinity and less salt water will run into nearby lakes and streams. Cost savings are also self-evident.

Salt brine freezes at 6 degrees below zero, while cheese brine has a much lower freezing point at 21 below. Provolone and mozzarella cheese brine are thought to have the best salt content, and is permitted for roadway application only if limited to eight gallons per ton of rock salt.

Polk County, Minnesota estimates they saved $40,000 in rock salt expenses in 2009, the year it started using cheese brine on its highways. Washington State also uses cheese brine in an anti-icing mixture. Milwaukee hopes to see the same benefits.
ABOUT THE WisDOT TIME PROGRAM

Wisconsin recognizes the importance of Traffic Incident Management (TIM) in maintaining the operational safety and efficiency of the state’s roadways. The Traffic Incident Management Enhancement (TIME) Program is a comprehensive, multi-agency, multi-discipline program, led by WisDOT, and dedicated to:

- Improving responder safety;
- Enhancing the safe, quick clearance of traffic incidents;
- Supporting prompt, reliable, interoperable communications.

Email us at timeprogram@dot.wi.gov for more information.
Once incidents started happening, the STOC called in additional staff. Control room operators worked overtime monitoring road conditions and incidents with their cameras, in addition to keeping an eye on weather radar.

When operators spotted an incident, they were contacted directly to provide visual confirmation of incidents and provide exact locations to partner agencies.

The STOC was also able to aid in public communication by coordinating with State Patrol and the WisDOT’s Southeast Region to write and issue media releases.

With coordination from the STOC, agencies are able to respond faster and more efficiently to interruptions in travel. For more information about the STOC, or to schedule a tour, email scott.nauman@dot.wi.gov.

Call the STOC for assistance with:
∙ Signal Knockdowns/Malfunctions ∙ Infrastructure Damage ∙ Flooding ∙ Traffic Incidents ∙

Operators are available 24/7 at:
1-800-375-7302 (Not for public use)

December Pileups continued from Page 2

“These incidents went above and beyond anything you can plan, but to have that foundation of principles is a good starting point,” said Sergeant Rudie.

While there were specific recommendations for each incident, a common theme reported among many of the agencies involved, was an increased need for communication. Agencies with pre-established working relationships reported a high level of coordination and situational awareness shared between law enforcement, fire, EMS and towing.

Sergeant Younglove said that this was the best unified command she’s seen in her 27 years with State Patrol. “15 years ago, it would have taken just as long to clear one major incident as it took to clear all eight incidents we saw that day. There were no egos, no personalities. We had one common goal: to preserve life safety, document the scene, and clear it out. It was amazing.”

“The best part of the response is, in general, all of the responders,” said Sergeant Karpinski about the response. He also pointed out that private partnerships played a major role in mitigating the incidents. “Our tow company was huge,” said Captain Karpinski. “They made that incident end well because of their organization and their help.”

Looking ahead, Captain Karpinski says it’s important to focus on how the lessons from this event can be utilized in the future.

“I guess the final big thing that came out of it was the experience of learning our shortcomings internally as a region, in case something like this was to happen again,” Karpinski noted.

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STOC Highlight continued from Page 2

TIME Program Announcements Continued from Page 1

Through the proper use of TIM protocols, responder safety at crash scenes will be increased through the use of reflective clothing, vehicle positioning and proper advanced warnings to the other drivers on the road. These are a couple of small things that when executed together, will help everyone get home safely at the end of the day.

The TIME Program is also going to schedule meetings for the TIME Standing Committee and the TIME Coalition in the near future. I am looking forward to working with both groups in order to develop a plan for the TIME Program for 2014. I will also schedule a meeting for all the TIM instructors throughout the state in order to receive their input on how to make the TIM training program even better than it already is.

Now that I have just over four months in my position as program manager and with the addition of Gene Oldenburg (ETO Program Manager) and Marquis Young (TIME Engineer), we are starting to evaluate the many facets of the TIME/ETO Program. But more importantly, we have identified how important the TIME and ETO Programs are to the state. The need for TIM training and the development of cooperative relationships between all of Wisconsin’s first responders is the key to success in everything we do. Through the spirit of cooperation and the utilization of TIM protocols, it will hopefully provide everyone working in and around crash scenes the safest work environment possible.

No matter how much we train, working in or around a crash scene on our roadways is an inherently dangerous activity. This was evidenced as recently as January 27, 2014 when WI State Patrol Trooper Justin Hansen was seriously injured when he was struck while on the side of the road. Trooper Hansen was at a crash scene in Winnebago County and while retrieving some equipment from the trunk of his cruiser, he was struck by an out of control vehicle. The crash caused severe injuries to Trooper Hansen. Our prayers go out to Trooper Hansen and his family.

Please stay safe and I look forward to working with you in 2014.

David L. Spakowicz
TIME Program Manager