

## State of Florida

### “OPEN ROADS POLICY”

#### *Quick Clearance for Safety and Mobility*

This agreement by and between the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) establishes a policy for FHP and FDOT personnel to expedite the removal of vehicles, cargo, and debris from roadways on the State Highway System to restore, in an URGENT MANNER the safe and orderly flow of traffic following a motor vehicle crash or incident on Florida’s roadways.

**Whereas:** Public safety is the highest priority and must be maintained especially when injuries or hazardous materials are involved. The quality of life in the State of Florida is heavily dependent upon the free movement of people, vehicles, and commerce. The FHP and FDOT share the responsibility for achieving and maintaining the degree of order necessary to make this free movement possible. Agencies have the responsibility to do whatever is reasonable to reduce the risk to responders, secondary crashes, and delays associated with incidents, crashes, roadway maintenance, construction, and enforcement activities.

The following operating standards are based on the philosophy that the State Highway System will not be closed or restricted any longer than is absolutely necessary.

**Be it resolved:** Roadways will be cleared of damaged vehicles, spilled cargo, and debris as soon as it is safe to do so. It is understood that damage to vehicles or cargo may occur as a result of clearing the roadway on an urgent basis. While reasonable attempts to avoid such damage shall be taken, the highest priority is restoring traffic to normal conditions. Incident caused congestion has an enormous cost to society.

#### *Florida Highway Patrol Responsibilities*

Members of FHP who respond to the scene of traffic incidents will make clearing the travel portion of the roadway a high priority. When an investigation is required, it will be conducted in as expedient a manner as possible considering the severity of the collision. Non-critical portions of the investigation may be delayed until lighter traffic conditions allow completion of those tasks. The FHP will close only those lanes absolutely necessary to safely conduct the investigation. The FHP will coordinate with FDOT representatives to set up appropriate traffic control, establish alternate routes, expedite the safe movement of traffic at the scene, and restore the roadway to normal conditions as soon as possible.

Whenever practical, damaged vehicles on access controlled roadways will be removed to off ramps, accident investigation sites, or other safe areas for completion of investigations to reduce the delays associated with motorists slowing to “gawk.” Tow trucks will be requested as soon as it is evident that they will be needed to clear the roadway. FHP will assure that all authorized tow operators have met established competency levels and that the equipment is of appropriate size, capacity, and design to meet all standards of the State of Florida.

The FHP will not unnecessarily cause any delay in reopening all or part of a roadway to allow a company to dispatch its own equipment to off-load cargo or recover a vehicle or load that is impacting traffic during peak traffic hours or creating a hazard to the public. The FHP and FDOT will cooperate in planning and implementing clearance operations in the most safe and expeditious manner.

### *Florida Department of Transportations Responsibilities*

When requested by FHP or other emergency agency, FDOT will respond and deploy resources to major traffic incidents 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Each FDOT District will develop and implement response procedures to meet the goal of providing initial traffic control within **30 minutes** of notification during the assigned working hours of each maintenance yard, and **60 minutes** after hours.

The FDOT, in coordination with FHP, will upgrade traffic controls, determine detour routes, and discuss clearance strategies. When requested, FDOT will provide temporary traffic controls to ensure a safe work zone for all responders and the motoring public.

The FDOT, in cooperation with the FHP, will determine and deploy the necessary heavy equipment and manpower to reopen the roadway if there is a delay in clearing the travel lanes, or if the task is beyond the capabilities of the wrecker service on scene. If cargo or spilled loads [non-hazardous] are involved, FDOT will make every effort to assist in the relocation of the materials in the shortest possible time, using whatever equipment necessary. All such materials or any vehicles relocated by FDOT will be moved the minimum possible distance to eliminate traffic hazards.

FDOT personnel will document all hours and equipment used for traffic control, roadway clearance, and debris clean up. FDOT will place traffic control devices at the scene should any damaged vehicles or cargo remain on the shoulder adjacent to the travel lanes for removal at a later time.

The FDOT and FHP will continually work together to ensure that the needs of motorists on state roadways are being met in the most professional, safe, and efficient manner.

***Therefore, it is agreed as follows:***

The FHP and the FDOT will evaluate and continually update and modify their operating policies, procedures, rules, and standards to assure they are consistent with this “**OPEN ROADS POLICY**” agreement.

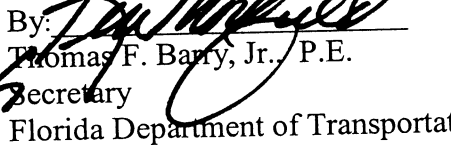
FHP, together with FDOT, will research, evaluate, and conduct training in the most advanced technologies, equipment, and approved methods for the documentation and investigation of crash or incident scenes. FHP, using these techniques, will prioritize the investigative tasks and reopen travel lanes upon completion of tasks that must be conducted, without the impediment of traffic flowing.

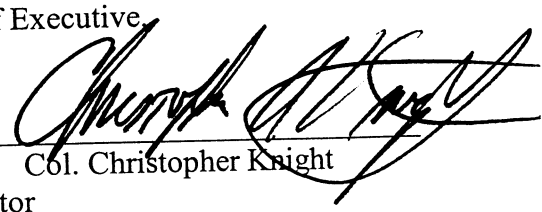
Roadways will be cleared as soon as possible. It is the goal of all agencies that **all incidents be cleared from the roadway within 90 minutes of the arrival of the first responding officer**. This goal being made with the understanding that more complex scenarios may require additional time for complete clearance.

***It is further agreed that:***

FHP and FDOT will actively solicit and enlist other state, county, and local agencies, political subdivisions, industry groups, and professional associations to endorse and become party to this “**OPEN ROADS PHILOSOPHY**” for the State of Florida.

In witness whereof, each party hereto has caused this document to be executed in its name and on its behalf by its duly authorized Chief Executive.


By:   
Thomas F. Barry, Jr., P.E.  
Secretary  
Florida Department of Transportation

By:   
Col. Christopher Knight  
Director  
Florida Highway Patrol

Date: 10/30/02

Date: 11-1-02

Reviewed By:

  
Agency's General Counsel Office

  
Agency's General Counsel Office