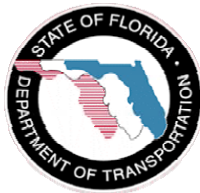# Critical Incident Reviews

Technical Memorandum

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1.   Purpose

This Technical Memorandum documents the establishment of the Critical Incident Review (CIR) process for the Collier-Lee and Charlotte-Sarasota-Manatee Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Teams, and is prepared under Subtask 4 of Task Order Authorization 5 of the Florida Department of Transportation District 1 Contract Number C-8679, Districtwide ITS Planning.

This Memorandum includes:
- The initial criteria established by the TIM Teams for calling a CIR,
- A description of the CIR meeting process,
- Potential meeting places for each county,
- Special personnel authorizations, and
- Information on agency contacts.

2.   Background

Incident responders need a means to convene to discuss an incident and how it was handled. A critical incident review (CIR) provides a forum to identify both the good practices and those that could be improved.

The CIR is held under a no-fault atmosphere. It is not a finger-pointing session. It is a means of addressing issues of concerns to responders, and seeking a better way of approaching a particular incident-mitigating method the next time a similar situation occurs.

Critical incident reviews, which are also known as post-incident analyses, after-action reviews, and post-incident debriefings, provide significant benefits. CIRs present:
- An opportunity for responders to get together to discuss an incident in a no-fault atmosphere.
- A means of improving safety and clearance times at incident scenes.
- An effective tool to identify areas of improvement and confirm the value of good practices through a meeting of responders shortly after a major incident occurs.
- A means to help in developing and maintaining lines of communication and relationships among agencies.
- Coordinated enhancements to the activities of the TIM teams through use of the lessons learned and articulated in the course of CIRs.[1]

The use of CIRs is supported and encouraged by the Collier-Lee and Charlotte-Sarasota-Manatee TIM Teams. Input from members of the teams has served as the foundation for establishing this critical incident review initiative in the region.

3.   Criteria

Various criteria to initiate a CIR have been considered by both the Collier-Lee and the Charlotte-Sarasota-Manatee TIM Teams. General agreement has been reached that a CIR should be initiated:
- When the travel lanes of I-75 are fully closed in any single direction for 3 hours or more, or
- When the incident results in a fatality or serious injury to an incident responder, or
- When any responding agency has an issue or concern that merits a CIR.

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[1] Traffic Incident Management Handbook, Federal Highway Administration, November 2000

The TIM Teams will continually monitor the CIR process and may change the criteria in the future based on ongoing experience. TIM member suggestions for other criteria include:

- Incidents with single or multiple fatalities
- Incidents involving 5 or more vehicles
- Incidents with a large dollar loss
- Incidents with multi-agency response

When modifying the criteria, a balance needs to be maintained so that CIRs are productive, yet not redundant. Too many CIRs dilute the value of the exercise and negatively impact routine work schedules, likely resulting in declining participation.

4. Initiating a Critical Incident Review

Any response agency who is part of the incident management process can call for a CIR for a qualifying incident. The agency representative may make initial participant notifications and obtain the venue, or may enlist the aid of the TIM Team consultants.

As part of Task Order 11 under this contract, the TIM Team consultants can provide on-call facilitation of CIRs.

Should a specific issue arise between two agencies at a particular incident, it may not be necessary to convene a full CIR. In this case, on-scene representatives of the two agencies and a facilitator may hold a review to resolve the issue.

5. Format

To insure that results from the debriefing are critical yet constructive, it is important that the facilitator of the CIR maintain a frank, non-confrontational tone for the meeting, and that the meeting be concluded on a positive note.

Typical steps in the CIR process include:

- Recreate the incident chronology (sequence of events). When helpful, use visual aids such as video or maps, to determine the sequence of events during the response and clearance of the incident. (News video or newspaper articles may also provide supplemental incident information and give an indication of public perception of the incident and how well it was handled.)
- Each agency offers input on the safety, response and clearance aspects that worked well and poorly.
- Determine if or how these aspects of the incident could or should be managed differently next time.
- Identify areas that need improvement and provide recommended solutions.
- Discuss suggestions, and establish consensus as to corrective action.
- Reinforce the positive elements of the management of the incident.
- Document the results of the CIR (e.g., participants, observations, and action items). While there will be no formal report or findings, minutes should be distributed to all attendees.
- Follow-up on the results of the CIR with TIM Team members to continually improve the incident management process. Action items and lessons learned will be used at the regular TIM Team meetings to improve traffic incident management performance.

An outline has been developed for participants and facilitators to use for guidance during the CIR (Appendix A).

6. Timing

Critical Incident Reviews should be held as soon as possible following the response. The Washington State Incident Response Guidelines provide the following guidance: "Conducting the debriefing immediately after the incident ensures that all of the affected agencies are present at the debriefing, and efforts to schedule a future meeting will not be necessary. If a debriefing meeting cannot be scheduled immediately following the incident, then the meeting should be scheduled no later than seven days after the incident."[2]

If possible, the CIR should be held the same shift day the incident occurred, as scheduling is a particular concern to agencies such as fire rescue that work extended shifts with long off-periods. If the CIR cannot be scheduled the same shift day, it may be difficult to get fire rescue or other responders to participate at a later date.

7. Attendees

CIR participants should be responders who were on the scene or otherwise directly involved with the incident. The on-scene responders have first-hand knowledge of the real issues to be reviewed. They can address the concerns of other responders in a more informed and responsive manner since they were on the scene and likely saw the same actions. Personnel who were not involved in the incident cannot relate to what was experienced during the pressures of the emergency. Supervisors or other representative personnel who were not at the scene or directly involved in the incident should not participate in the CIR.

In addition to on-scene responders, attendees should include dispatchers involved in the incident and informed agency representatives whose jurisdictions were affected by traffic on diversion routes.

8. Authorization

On-scene personnel may need authorization from an agency supervisor to participate in a CIR. For example in the fire service, this would typically be the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, or Deputy Chief. However, since CIRs are only called for incidents of some significance, higher level agency personnel will likely be at the scene and special authorization would not be needed.

TIM team members were polled to determine if any special authorizations would be needed. Special authorizations needed are listed, by county, in Appendix B.

9. Venues

Locations for holding CIRs should be selected based on proximity to the incident and be convenient to the incident responders. Ideally, the venue should be a neutral location that does not have the potential to influence the outcome of the CIR. A list of venues located in the I-75 corridor has been developed, with at least one location identified in each county. The venue locations, provided in Appendix C, are listed in geographical order by I-75 interchange, from south to north.

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[2] Althauser, Jerry, State of Washington Incident Response Team Northwest Region Guidelines Revised (1998)

10. Contact Information

The TIM Team Stakeholder lists are regularly updated and provide the most comprehensive listing of responder contact information available. The most up-to-date lists should always be consulted. The TIM Team Stakeholder lists dated June 2005 are provided in Appendix D for reference purposes.

11. Summary

Critical incident reviews provide a proven, no-fault means for multiple agencies to discuss a major incident and to identify successful procedures and potential solutions for problems experienced. Lessons learned from critical incident reviews are used to improve safety and reduce the clearance times of subsequent incidents.

12. Appendix A – Format Guidelines

Collier-Lee TIM Team   Charlotte-Sarasota-Manatee TIM Team

Critical Incident Review

Format

We are here to discuss the incident and how it was handled under a no-fault atmosphere.

This is a means to address issues concerning responders and involved agencies.

The objective is to identify both good practices and those that could be improved.

- Participant introductions

- General details: date, time, location and weather

- Sequence of events during the response and clearance of the incident

- Each agency offers input on the safety, response and clearance aspects that worked well and poorly

- Determine if or how any aspects of the incident could or should be managed differently next time

- Identify areas that need improvement and provide recommended solutions

- Discuss suggestions, and establish consensus as to corrective action

- Reinforce the positive elements of the management of the incident

Minutes will be e-mailed to every participant (e.g., who attended, observations, and action items), but not a formal report or findings

Thank you for your participation and contribution

February 2005

13. Appendix B – Special Authorization

County	Agency	Authorization	Phone
Collier County	None	None	n/a
Lee County	Jorgensen* C S	*NAMES REMOVED*	*NUMBERS REMOVED*
	Lee County DOT	Director	
Charlotte County	Jorgensen C S		
Sarasota County	Sarasota County Fire/EMS		
	Jorgensen C S		
Manatee County	Jorgensen C S		

* Roy Jorgensen is the Asset Maintenance Contractor.

14. Appendix C – Critical Incident Review Venues

A table lists county, I-75 exit, location, contact phone number and name, and any comments.

15. Appendix D – TIM Teams Stakeholder Lists

A table lists name, title, agency, address, city, state, zip, phone & extension, fax, and e-mail address.