



84th Edition

Polk County Traffic Incident Management Team

July 2019



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**Upcoming Events:**

**TIM Team Meeting :**

Thursday  
**October 10, 2019**  
**10:00 am**  
 Polk County Sheriff's Office  
 1891 Jim Keene Boulevard  
 Winter Haven, FL 33880



**The Annual 2018-2019 Traffic Incident Management Team Self-Assessment (TIMSA) Survey**



The Annual 2018-2019 Traffic Incident Management Team Self-Assessment (TIMSA) Surveys was completed at the recent TIM Team meeting in Polk County and is being conducted at the partnering Collier-Lee-Charlotte and Sarasota-Manatee District One TIM Team meetings in August. The purpose of the TIMSA is to provide a formal process for State and local transportation, public safety and private sector partners to collaboratively assess their traffic incident management programs and identify opportunities for improvement. In 2003, the Federal Highway Administration facilitated the initial assessments of Traffic Incident Management programs in the largest 75 urban areas of the United States. Representatives of key transportation and public safety agencies and private sector partners in each area conducted the assessments. The TIMSA is conducted in each urban area annually. These annual assessments have enabled state and local program managers and practitioners to evaluate their TIM programs and identify strengths and weaknesses in their programs in order to prioritize program activities and initiatives. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) publishes an annual National Summary report on the TIMSA aggregating data from all urban areas.

**The District One Road Ranger Trucks Have a New Look!**

The Road Ranger trucks have been wrapped and now display the Sate Farm sponsorship.

The Road Rangers provide incident management response services and limited no-cost highway assistance to motorists to improve highway safety for emergency responders and the motoring public.



**Emergency Shoulder Use**

To help prepare for the upcoming hurricane season, Emergency Shoulder Use (ESU) was discussed with the team. ESU is Florida's innovative strategy to increase traffic capacity during hurricane evacuations on key corridors within the state.



- Uses existing paved shoulders
- Replaces former One-Way Plans, also known as contraflow and reverse laning
- First used during Hurricane Irma in 2017 and again in 2018 for Hurricane Michael

To view the ESU Standard Operating Procedures for District One, please visit the TIM team website at: <http://www.swftim.org>

**Texting While Driving a Primary Offense**



Legislation for texting and driving was signed into law moving it from a secondary offense to a primary offense on July 1st. Texting while driving has been illegal in Florida for years, but existing law was largely ineffective in terms of

enforcement. Because officers were not able to pull drivers over and cite them unless they committed another traffic violation, few motorists were actually cited under the law. In the entirety of 2018, for example, law enforcement issued just over 1,600 citations throughout the state.

The new law is a sensible and much-needed update to legislation that hasn't been effective or enforced, and an appropriate response to a serious public safety problem.

- Florida saw roughly 50,000 car accidents caused by texting and distracted driving in 2016.
- Driver distraction accounted for at least 233 deaths in 2016 and thousands of injuries statewide.

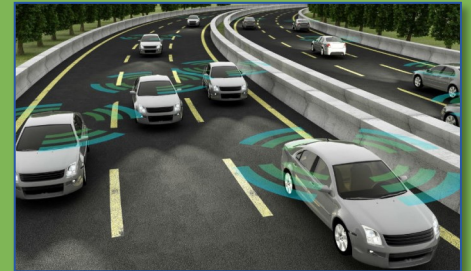
To learn more, please visit the following website: <https://www.dmvflorida.org/florida-traffic-laws/texting-and-driving>

**Autonomous Vehicles and its Effect on the First Responder Community**

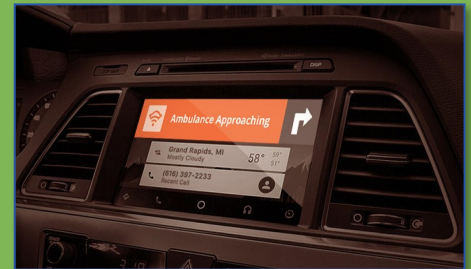
An ongoing hot topic among the TIM community is autonomous vehicles and its effect on the first responder community. As more autonomous and semi-autonomous cars find their way onto public roads, law enforcement officers and first responders are figuring out how to handle them in collisions or during traffic stops. Recently on [Respondersafety.org](http://Respondersafety.org) a new module was created addressing the following: Autonomous vehicles are already being tested on the nation's roads, and vehicles in "self-driving" mode have already been involved in several crashes where the technology may have failed to respond to other vehicles as expected. Yet, outreach to autonomous vehicle technology companies and auto manufacturers by the Emergency Responder Safety Institute has raised a number of concerns. Some companies haven't resolved how these technologies will interface with emergency responders operating at traffic incidents and with temporary traffic controls at emergency scenes. Some companies haven't thought about these issues at all. Some companies have recognized the need to address new technology and emergency incident scenes but have not yet developed complete solutions. Few of these technology companies have expertise in how traffic incident management is handled and thus don't know what autonomous vehicles need to be able to do, or how they will do it, when approaching and passing emergency scenes.<sup>1</sup>

First Responders are likely to see a variety of applications for and impacts of autonomous vehicle technology in the near future. Collision avoidance technology is already being built into new passenger vehicles, and smart vehicle features are increasingly likely to become part of the electronics built into first responder vehicles. For instance, the vehicles might use autonomous technology to parallel park at an emergency incident.<sup>2</sup>

Communicating with other vehicles on the road is another potential benefit, especially given the debate over using lights and sirens. Technology will also alert drivers through their vehicles of oncoming emergency vehicles. Waymo, an autonomous vehicle manufacture has created a vehicle that is able to detect emergency vehicles by their lights and sirens and automatically pull over. Additionally, they released a [guide](#) for how police, firefighters, and other first responders should interact with its self-driving vehicles. The company established a 24-hour telephone hotline for emergencies. Emergency responders will call the hotline to identify the numerical identifier of the vehicle (displayed on the front and rear windows), license plate, and any location information. Information in the guide includes how to identify a Waymo self-driving vehicle, where to access vehicle information in and around the vehicle, and how to shut off and tow the vehicle. According to the guide, the Waymo vehicle uses sensors to identify police or emergency vehicles by detecting their appearance, sirens, and emergency lights.<sup>2</sup>



One of the most notable potential benefits involves the reduction (or perhaps one day the elimination) of vehicle collisions and associated fatalities. Vehicle collisions continue to be one of the leading causes of death and injury, and most collisions are attributed to human error. Certainly, the ability to significantly reduce highway deaths and injuries, along with the corresponding economic loss by removing the possibility of human error will be a major benefit of autonomous vehicle technology. In addition to reducing traffic collisions, autonomous vehicles have the potential to significantly reduce traffic congestion and, by extension, some of the pollution traditionally associated with idling vehicles.<sup>3</sup>



Autonomous vehicle technology is moving to market very quickly and test vehicles may already be on the roads in your jurisdiction. Are drivers ready for them?

- (1) Autonomous Vehicles. Responder Safety. Web 07.2019 <https://learning.respondersafety.com/>
- (2) About Autonomous Vehicles. EMS1. Fire Rescue1. Web 06.2019. <https://www.ems1.com/>
- (3) Preparing for Future with Autonomous Vehicles. Kevin Davis, Highway Patrol. Police Chief Magazine. Web 07.2019. <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/preparing-for-a-future-with-autonomous-vehicles/>

Article submitted by Brandy Boccuti, Metric Engineering

**T I M TEAM WEBSITE!**  
[www.swfltim.org](http://www.swfltim.org)

*The Polk County TIM Team is committed to implementing the Quick Clearance principles of Florida's Open Roads Policy through the "3 Cs" of TIM: Communication, Cooperation and Coordination, and providing the public with the best real-time Motorist Information available. Team membership draws from state, regional, and local transportation agencies, public safety providers, and other organizations and companies that service the traveling public. The Teams, sponsored by the FDOT, meet bi-monthly.*

**Mission**

*The TIM Team Program brings together all agencies involved in clearing the roadway crashes with the objective of improving detection, verification, response, and clearance times to expeditiously remove a motor vehicle crash or incident from the roadway while providing the best real-time information to motorists, resulting in a safer highway environment for both incident responders and motorists*

