

# Georgia Traffic Incident Management Program



## Q2 2025 NEWSLETTER



TRIP Incident in Zone 26

### QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHT

Quarter 2 of 2025 saw Georgia's Towing and Recovery Incentive Program (TRIP) in final preparations for the North Georgia TRIP expansion - a major expansion of the coverage area effective July 1. This expansion of TRIP service areas completely covers Interstate 85 in Georgia and Interstate 75 from Atlanta to the Tennessee border. TRIP was initially implemented in the metro Atlanta region, and its success there has driven GDOT's goal of TRIP coverage expansion as part of the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan.

TRIP was launched in 2007 to address crashes involving commercial trucks or other large vehicles. Aside from affecting those directly involved in the crash, these incidents create significant traffic delays, increase air pollution from idling vehicles sitting in the accident traffic queue, and contribute to secondary crashes. Since the program's inception, TRIP has reduced clearance times by 80% through improved emergency response coordination.

The North Georgia TRIP expansion has been in development for over a year and involved analysis of crash data, stakeholder coordination in the expansion areas, zone mapping, and thorough reviews of towing and recovery companies that applied to be considered as a TRIP tower in an assigned zone. The expansion zones were further supported with rigorous training of the new TRIP-certified towing companies and emergency responders, and coordination

## WELCOME!

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between local response agencies, GDOT, the Transportation Management Center, Highway Emergency Response Operators, and the Coordinated Highway Assistance & Maintenance Program—key components to preparing for a successful implementation.

With this expansion, TRIP expects further success in mitigating large-scale roadway incidents in north and central Georgia. Plans to fully extend TRIP coverage statewide are already in motion. Access information about TRIP, the North Georgia Expansion, and the TRIP dashboards [here](#).

# QUARTER 2 LESSONS LEARNED AFTER ACTION REVIEW

## Plan for Risks Before They Occur

### *Reinforcing Communications Across Jurisdictions*

Responders do not have to wait for errors to play out before correcting them. Recognizing where an issue even could have occurred in an otherwise smooth response effort is equally important when reviewing an incident.

During a recent incident involving two jurisdictions, the response was smooth and well-coordinated. However, the After-Action Review revealed a clear opportunity for confusion around communication—specifically regarding who received the initial size-up, what information was still needed, and how to avoid duplicating tasks. It was fortunate that this was not the case, but it easily could have been and serves as an equally valuable lesson.



*Photo courtesy of Brand X Photos via Photo Images*

This incident was a reminder that TIM Team meetings are an ideal forum to walk through expectations surrounding communications, roles, responsibilities, jurisdiction, capabilities, etc. Discussing how information is shared, who provides updates, and how agencies can support (and not replicate) each other's efforts helps strengthen response efficiency and builds trust across teams.

When it comes to considering future response efforts, the hypotheticals (accompanied by measurements of their probability and risk) are often just as important as the actual events. Whenever possible, agencies should coordinate together to avoid a response issue before it occurs. No matter how well a response effort goes, there are always elements that should be reviewed and improved upon to ensure the next multi-agency response is even stronger.



*Photo courtesy of Sean Davis via Getty Images*

# TRAINING UPDATES

## MANAGING MANAGED LANES

In May 2025, the Highway Emergency Response Operators (HERO) promoted a new group of Master Operators to their ranks after a rigorous two-week training period. During that time, they were introduced to a number of new policies and procedures specific to their new roles—chief among them reversible express lane (REL) management.

RELs transition twice daily as lanes are adjusted to best accommodate the direction of the majority of travelers on the affected interstate. HERO Master Operators take great care to ensure a safe transition that will not create any opportunity for vehicles to be travelling in opposite directions within the REL.

Master Operator students are required to be extremely familiar with the written REL policies in the classroom setting, but they must also demonstrate hands-on proficiency during four practical transitions that they participate in as part of their training. While the REL gates and signage are controlled remotely by the Transportation Management Center (TMC), the Master Operators must visually ensure – in a very specific order - that all signage and gates are operating correctly. In the event that they encounter a malfunctioning piece of equipment, they are trained to intervene and mitigate through manual operation of the gates or signs, if required. The entire process is very demanding and requires an extremely high level of coordination between HERO and the TMC.

The twice-daily safe and efficient transitioning of RELs ensures that motorists are able to maximize use of the lanes, which also positively impacts motorists on the surrounding roadways. RELs act very much like a relief valve to alleviate pressure within the system. And like all relief valves, care must be taken to ensure their safe operation. HERO Master Operators are practitioners of a higher level of care on our interstate roads, and we congratulate this newest group of Master Operators on their achievement.



*HERO Master Operator Trainees on Site for Training*

# GDOT EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

## JERRY WAYNE SMITH

### *Maintenance Liaison for Emergency Operations*

In the world of emergency operations, where precision, patience, and leadership converge, Jerry Wayne Smith stands out as a quiet yet impactful force. As GDOT's Maintenance Liaison for Emergency Operations, Jerry brings a unique blend of technical expertise, empathy, and community-minded service to every facet of his role. Jerry is recognized as GDOT's Employee of the Quarter, but his entire career reflects a deep commitment to public service, mentorship, and operational excellence.

Jerry joined GDOT in 2004 as an Equipment Operator I and has advanced through the ranks with distinction, gaining frontline experience in nearly every area of maintenance. "I never imagined that teaching and talent development would become one of my favorite aspects of the job," Jerry shares. "But over time, I found a real passion for mentoring and helping others grow in their roles."



*Jerry Wayne Smith*

Beyond training manuals and maintenance schedules, responding to emergencies that affect Georgia's communities is one of the most rewarding aspects of his job. Jerry is often among the first to respond and one of the last to leave. "Supporting small towns and local communities during times of crisis is where I feel most connected to the mission of GDOT," he says.

Most recently, Jerry played a key role in planning and coordinating GDOT's 2025 Hurricane Roundtable. The roundtable enhanced statewide storm preparedness and response. Jerry's logistical insights, intra-agency relationships, and calm leadership helped shape key discussions on resource deployment, communication, and operational continuity—reinforcing his reputation as a strategic problem solver and trusted team player.

His understanding of the future is as sharp as his grasp of the present. A vocal advocate for embracing innovation, Jerry believes transportation and emergency operations must evolve alongside emerging technologies. "Electric vehicles, drones, and automation are already changing the way we work. If we want to stay relevant and effective, we need to be open to new ideas and solutions," he says.

# GDOT EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

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Jerry's dedication to public service also shines outside of work. For over two decades, he has volunteered with the Moultrie Masonic Lodge's Child ID Program, which helps parents create secure identification records to aid in the recovery of missing children. From fingerprinting and photos to educating families on child safety, Jerry has worked closely with law enforcement and community groups to expand the reach and effectiveness of this lifesaving initiative.

Through his involvement with organizations like the Firefighters of Colquitt County, the Colquitt County Sheriff's Department, and the Moultrie Police Department, Jerry has helped organize donation drives, coordinated community events, and recruited and trained volunteers to support underserved populations.

Jerry sums up his approach to leadership with a simple but powerful piece of advice he would give his younger self: "Trust the process. There's a plan even if you don't know it." And when it comes to succeeding in his role, he emphasizes the importance of patience and compassion. "You'll see people at their best and their worst. In those moments, lead with empathy. It makes all the difference."

Jerry Wayne Smith exemplifies the best of public service. His career is a testament to leadership forged through hard work, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to helping others—on the job, in his hometown, and wherever Georgia needs him most.



*Photo Courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service on Rawpixel*

# TIM TEAM OF THE QUARTER: CONGRATULATIONS, REGION 9 TIM TEAM!

The Region 9 Traffic Incident Management (TIM) community encompasses 10 counties, three of which have active TIM Teams—Meriwether, Troup, and Taylor. These TIM Teams collaborate quarterly with members from all areas of public safety, including local towers, coroners, school districts, railway companies, electrical companies, regional emergency medical service teams, Georgia State Patrol (GSP), the Motor Carrier Compliance Division (MCCD), and the Coordinated Highway Assistance and Management Program (CHAMP). This level of collaboration sets a high bar in this Regional TIM community.

Region 9 stands out for its commitment to offering training to advance its responders' and public safety professionals' skills at managing traffic incidents, namely through the National TIM Responder Training and the Towing and Recovery Incentive Program (TRIP) training, both of which require focus, funding, and resources from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). TRIP trainings have been conducted for the Meriwether and Troup County Fire Department staff, Troop D Officers of GSP, Region D of the MCCD, the Meriwether and Troup County Sheriff's Office Patrol Division, Traffic Division, the E-911 Operators, and the Regional CHAMP Operators.

Meriwether and Troup counties have just been introduced to TRIP as part of GDOT's 2025 TRIP expansion. Meriwether County Fire Chief Danny Stephens, Meriwether County Sheriff Carl Smith, Troup County Fire Chief Micheal Strickland, and Troup County Sheriff James Woodruff were highly supportive in orchestrating the required training with the Sheriff Department's Patrol Division and 911 Operators. The Region 9 TIM Team continues to improve, expand, and train to reduce adverse impacts on the motoring public, lessening the time public safety teams spend working crashes on the Interstate and State highways, which increases safety for everyone in this region.

As the saying goes, "We want our members to come to work, do their jobs, and return home safely. That's a great day!"

Thank you, Region 9 TIM Team, for your commitment to keeping our responders safe, quickly clearing our roadways and keeping the motoring public safe!

We want to highlight Fire Chief James Edward Moulton ("Chief Eddie") of the City of Butler in Taylor County, who just retired at the beginning of 2025, has been a true leader in Region 9 and a champion of TIM. Chief Eddie is beloved and respected by the community as a confidant, supporter, mentor, and friend! He has been active with the Butler Volunteer Fire Department for nearly 40 years, and it was not uncommon to see the chief rise above the call of duty to help others, such as helping land the evac helicopter or cooking for responders during weather events and other emergencies.

A great BIG Thank You to Fire Chief Eddie Moulton of the City of Butler Fire Department, who helped champion the Region 9 TIM Team to what it is today!



# INNOVATION OF THE QUARTER

## Alpha Safenet™

One of the pillars of traffic incident management (TIM) is awareness of technological advancements—so we are excited to share innovations in the region that could help agencies around Georgia improve their TIM efforts. This quarter, we are highlighting ALPHA SAFENET®, a Chattanooga-based traffic safety company that has launched its OverWatch Work Zone Safety Platform. The following expert from ALPHA SAFENET explains how this system works to alert drivers and those on the side of the road before a collision can occur.

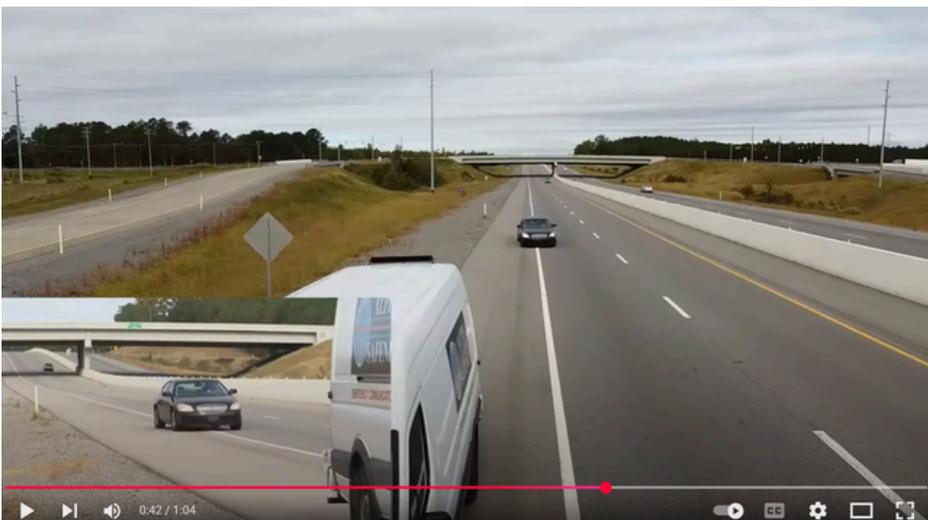
ALPHA SAFENET Press Release:

OverWatch Work Zone Safety Platform, [is] a state-of-the-art system designed to prevent accidents in work zones. The platform, now available for immediate deployment, uses advanced technology to alert both distracted drivers and work crews of potential collisions, offering a vital safety solution for departments of transportation (DOTs), first responders, trucking, and towing operations.

The OverWatch system employs light detection and ranging (LiDAR) technology to establish a virtual safety perimeter around work zones, instantly detecting vehicles that breach the boundary. When triggered, the system delivers powerful audible and visual warnings to both workers and drivers, enabling real-time threat mitigation. Its dual-alert capability—simultaneously notifying workers of danger and prompting drivers to correct their course—sets it apart as a groundbreaking tool in traffic safety. In California, the system has already proven its effectiveness, preventing multiple accidents in active work zones.

The OverWatch platform offers flexible configurations to suit diverse operational needs, including a portable self-contained unit, a deluxe mounted version with video targeting, and a modular system adaptable to various setups. Beyond LiDAR, the system can integrate pneumatic hose or manual activation methods, giving DOT personnel versatility in deployment while minimizing false positive alarms.

Interested in learning more? Visit the [ALPHA SAFENET website](#) and [watch a demonstration on YouTube here](#) or with the QR code!



Screenshot from Alpha Safenet's ALPHA OVERWATCH - DRONE VIEW video on YouTube



# NIOSH FIREFIGHTER FATALITY INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

## Line of Duty Death Report

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has released the results of their investigation into the September 4, 2024, line of duty death of Battalion Chief Christopher Eddy of Greene County Fire Rescue. The NIOSH report makes numerous recommendations regarding this fire. Perhaps the most consequential of those recommendations for all responders (Recommendation #6 from the report) is the fact that the trailer itself "contains a significant amount of fuel (hazard), even if it is empty."

The fire originated in the tractor portion and quickly involved the passenger compartment. The trailer was a Type 111 intermodal freight container that was configured for refrigeration, and the front of the trailer was exposed to flame impingement as the tractor became more and more involved with fire. Refrigerated ("Reefer") containers include a mounted refrigeration unit (genset) near the tractor and are comprised of inner and outer steel walls with foam insulation between them.

For most responders who are approaching fires involving tractor trailers, the type of load is a primary concern. Its combustibility, reactivity, or hazardous nature can dictate responders' actions. This particular trailer was hauling pallets of frozen chicken and, consequently, was not placarded as hazardous. The load was determined during the investigation not to have contributed to the explosion of the trailer. Instead, the NIOSH report suggests that the refrigerated trailer itself provided the means for the explosion—the combination of the trailer's burning foam insulation as fuel and the airtight nature of the refrigerated compartment where pressure could build.

The report concluded that the foam between the inner and outer walls of the trailer began to burn, and the resulting heat, smoke, and unburned materials suspended in the smoke began to fill the trailer and become pressurized and, possibly, oxygen deprived. The introduction of oxygen into this heated, pressurized, and fuel-rich space caused a rapid smoke explosion.

Chief Eddy's death is a terrible tragedy for his family and friends, the members of Greene County Fire Rescue and other responding agencies, and all responders across the state. Other firefighters were in the vicinity of the tractor, actively attempting to extinguish the fire when the trailer exploded. During the incident, first responders utilized traffic incident management concepts that kept civilian drivers and spectators at a safe distance from the fire and explosion.

We strongly recommend that all responders read the NIOSH Line of Duty Death Report for additional and more in-depth information about this incident and the full list of recommendations that all responders should consider on future similar incidents. It can be found on the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website here](#).

# NIOSH FIREFIGHTER FATALITY INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

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*View of driver side of involved vehicle following extinguishment. (Photo courtesy of fire department via the NIOSH report)*



*Type 111 Intermodal Freight Container secured to trailer chassis with genset (Photo courtesy of UL FSRI via the NIOSH report)*

# GDOT'S HURRICANE ROUNDTABLE

The 2025 GDOT Traffic Operations Hurricane Roundtable marked a pivotal moment in advancing Georgia's preparedness for hurricane season, as attendees dove deeper than ever in mock scenarios and analyzing potential pitfalls. This in-person exercise brought together a cross-section of professionals from GDOT, industry consultants, and other partner agencies for a high-impact planning session that prioritized resource alignment, operational readiness, and interagency coordination.

By convening stakeholders face-to-face, the roundtable created an environment ripe for real-time collaboration and fostering a sense of shared mission. Participants were able to openly exchange ideas, ask clarifying questions, and quickly generate adaptive strategies for the challenges presented—ranging from evacuation route logistics to post-impact recovery planning.



*GDOT's 2025 Hurricane Roundtable*

One standout advantage of this gathering was that it encouraged dynamic interaction. Cross-functional teams engaged in layered planning around Georgia's OPGON levels, ensuring that actions at each 24-hour threshold—from Hour 120 through post-landfall operations—were aligned and responsive. Discussions around contraflow execution, safety service patrol integration, and infrastructure protection gained depth through shared perspectives, leading to refined contingency plans.

The session also enhanced communication pathways critical during hurricane events. Attendees identified communication gaps and worked together to streamline information-sharing protocols by using shared coordination platforms and real-time collaboration tools. These improvements are expected to reduce response delays and improve situational awareness during future events.

The roundtable further reinforced the importance of unified coordination with Emergency Operations Centers, resilient infrastructure planning, and efficient traffic control along key corridors. It also laid the groundwork for stronger public messaging strategies that ensure timely, clear, and consistent alerts across all communication channels.

Importantly, participants addressed less predictable scenarios (such as utility loss at the Traffic Management Center or unexpected incidents along evacuation routes) demonstrating a proactive mindset that reflects a growing resilience within Georgia's transportation network.

The Hurricane Roundtable reaffirmed that when professionals from diverse roles and regions collaborate together... They not only improve preparedness, but they build trust, foster innovation, and perpetuate the collaborative spirit needed in emergency management. With strengthened communication, clearly defined roles, and refined procedures, Georgia's transportation teams are more ready than ever to respond when the next storm strikes.



Heavy Wrecker Technical Rescue Training for Responders

## UPCOMING EVENTS

For the latest information on training in your area, please check the [TIME Task Force calendar](#) or scan the QR code below to visit the website. NOTE: all dates, times, and locations are subject to change. Monitor the website calendar to verify before you travel to a meeting.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN A TIM TEAM



There are many ways to be active in TIM around Georgia. Interested in getting involved and attending a meeting? Visit [the TIME Task Force website](#) or scan the QR code to find your regional TIM Team and area analyst and contact [TIMteams@dot.ga.gov](mailto:TIMteams@dot.ga.gov) for more information.



National TIM Responder Training

## INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE NEWSLETTER?

Share an innovation your agency is implementing in your local community or a notable effort in traffic incident management.

## LMS INFORMATION

GDOT's learning management system (LMS) provides a free online centralized hub for registered users to have full access to and management of their training content. You can do things like view the course catalog, enroll in courses, track progress, and view and download your course completion certificates.

We invite first responders and the TIME Task Force community to experience the platform firsthand. We have over 6,000 users, 39 courses available, and 24/7 access.

The LMS portal has training content in the areas of NIMS, National TIM Responder Training, TIM, professional development, and much more. These will be readily accessible to you by a quick login to the LMS platform after your user profile has been created.

Happy Learning!

To enjoy user benefits and create your account, please email us at [TIM\\_Training@dot.ga.gov](mailto:TIM_Training@dot.ga.gov).