



STATE OF GEORGIA
OPEN ROADS POLICY

Quick Clearance for Safety and Mobility

*Whenever a roadway or travel lane is closed or partially blocked by a traffic incident, Georgia Law Enforcement, Transportation and Local Public Safety agencies shall re-open the roadway as soon as possible **IN AN URGENT MANNER**. Safety of the public and responders is the highest priority and must be preserved.*

This agreement by and between the Georgia Department of Public Safety¹ (DPS) the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and other State, county and local agencies or political subdivisions as identified by their signatures below, establishes a policy for DPS and GDOT personnel to expedite the removal of vehicles, cargo and debris in order to restore, in an **URGENT MANNER**, the safe and orderly flow of traffic following a traffic incident on Georgia’s roadways. This policy establishes a suggested benchmark for all Georgia traffic incident response agencies to adopt.

¹ The Georgia Department of Public Safety (DPS) oversees the day-to-day operation of the Georgia State Patrol (GSP), Capitol Police and the Motor Carrier Compliance Division (MCCD). All DPS references in this policy specifically include GSP and MCCD.

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

Whereas: The coordination, communication and cooperation between DPS and GDOT and the incident responders of other State, county and local agencies or political subdivisions is necessary so as to clear traffic incidents quickly while promoting the safety of responders and the motoring public.

Whereas: It is understood that damage to vehicles and/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. This cost is significantly greater than the salvage value of an already damaged vehicle and its cargo.

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

Be it resolved: Roadways will be cleared of wrecked vehicles, spilled cargo and debris as soon as it is safe to do so. The highest priority is restoring traffic to normal conditions. Reasonable attempts will be made to avoid additional damage to vehicles and/or cargo in the process of clearing the roadway. .

Department of Public Safety Responsibilities

DPS Troopers 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 the most expedient manner considering the severity of the traffic incident. Non-critical portions of the investigation may be delayed until lighter traffic conditions allow completion of those tasks associated with the investigation. DPS will close only those lanes absolutely necessary to conduct the investigation safely.

DPS will coordinate with GDOT representatives to set up appropriate traffic control, establish alternate routes, expedite the safe movement of traffic trapped at the scene, and restore the roadway to normal as soon as possible.

Whenever practical, traffic incidents on controlled access highway will be relocated to off-ramps, frontage roads, accident investigation sites or other safe areas for completion of investigations to reduce the delays associated with motorists slowing to "gawk" or "rubber neck." Wreckers will be requested as soon as it is evident that they will be needed to clear the roadway. DPS will review and update its wrecker authorization programs to include provisions that responding wrecker operators have met recognized competency levels and that the equipment is of appropriate size, capacity and design capable of providing quick clearance of roadway incidents.

In accordance with DPS Policy 7.05.3.B.18 - 20, DPS will ensure that all of its authorized wrecker operators have met the currently required competency levels and that the equipment is of appropriate size, capacity and design capable of providing quick clearance of roadway incidents. Periodically DPS in cooperation with GDOT will evaluate and update both wrecker operator and equipment standards.

DPS Trooper on scene will not unnecessarily delay reopening a roadway in order to allow a commercial vehicle company to dispatch its own equipment to off-load hazardous cargo or to recover a vehicle or load during peak traffic hours or if the incident is creating a traffic hazard. DPS and GDOT will cooperate in planning and implementing roadway clearance operations in the most safe and expeditious manner.

DPS, along with GDOT, will research, evaluate, and educate troopers in the most advanced technologies, equipment and approved methods for the documentation and investigation of traffic incidents or incident scenes. DPS, using these techniques, will prioritize the investigative tasks and reopen the travel lanes as soon as those tasks that must be conducted without traffic flowing are completed.

Georgia Department of Transportation Responsibilities

*GDOT, when requested by DPS or other law enforcement or emergency agency, will respond and deploy resources to major traffic incidents 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Each GDOT District will develop and implement notification and response procedures to meet the goal of providing initial traffic control within **30 minutes** of notification during normal working hours and **60 minutes** after hours and on weekends².*

GDOT, in coordination with DPS, will upgrade scene safety by providing arrow boards, advanced warning signs, cones and scene traffic controls; determine appropriate detour routes; and discuss incident clearance strategies.

GDOT will provide fully compliant temporary work zone traffic controls at major traffic incidents in which roadway clearance is expected to exceed 24 hours to ensure a safe incident scene for all responders and the motoring public.

GDOT, in cooperation with DPS, will determine and deploy the necessary heavy equipment and manpower to reopen the roadway if clearance of the travel lanes is being or could be expected to be delayed, or if the task is beyond the capabilities of the wrecker service on scene. If cargo or spilled loads (non-hazardous) are involved, GDOT 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 wreckage relocated by GDOT will be moved as short a distance as possible to eliminate the roadway blockage or hazard to traffic.

GDOT personnel will document all hours and equipment used for traffic control, roadway clearance and debris removal in order to seek reimbursement from the responsible party. GDOT will place cones or traffic control devices at the scene should any damaged vehicles or cargo remain adjacent to the travel lanes on the shoulder for removal at a later time.

GDOT and DPS will continually work together to ensure that the needs of motorists on our highways are being met in the most professional, safe, and efficient manner.

² Response times may be longer in remote rural areas where limited GDOT resources currently exist.

Responsibilities of Other State, County and Local Agencies or Political Subdivisions

*As other State, County and local agencies or political subdivisions endorse the open roads policy, individual signature pages that detail specific agency responsibilities will be attached as an appendix to this policy. Other State, County and local agencies or political subdivisions identified by their signatures (excluding DPS and GDOT) will not interfere with or impede DPS or GDOT in the performance and execution of responsibilities DPS and GDOT as set forth above. As is necessary and determined by either DPS or GDOT, these other State, county and local agencies or political subdivisions will coordinate, cooperate and communicate with DPS and GDOT in the performance and execution of the responsibilities of DPS and GDOT as set forth above. These other State, county and local agencies or political subdivisions will develop and implement notification and response procedures to meet the goal of providing initial traffic control within **30 minutes** of notification during normal working hours and **60 minutes** after hours and on weekends.*

These other State, county and local agencies or political subdivisions will train their respective, management, operational and response personnel in the responsibilities, procedures and intention of this Open Roads Policy agreement.

Therefore, it is agreed that:

Traffic incidents will be cleared from Georgia roadways as soon as possible. It is the goal of all traffic incident response agencies that all traffic incidents be cleared from the travel portion of the roadway within 90 minutes³.

DPS and GDOT 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.

DPS and GDOT will ensure that all management, operational and response personnel are aware of and adhere to the responsibilities, procedures and intention of this Open Roads Policy agreement.

The other State, County and local agencies or political subdivisions as identified by their signatures in the appendix will assist DPS and GDOT when necessary with the performance and execution of their responsibilities as set forth in the Open Roads Policy agreement.

It is further agreed that:

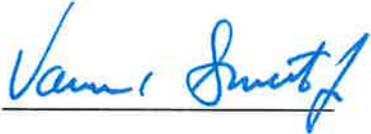
Both DPS, GDOT, and other State County and local agencies as identified by their signature in the appendix, will encourage and enlist other state, county and local agencies or political subdivisions to endorse and become party to this Open Roads Policy of the State of Georgia.

³ Response times may be longer in remote rural areas where limited GDOT resources currently exist.

In witness whereof, each party hereto has caused this document to be executed in its name and on its behalf by the duly authorized Chief Executives of these state agencies.

GEORGIA DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION

GEORGIA DEPT OF PUBLIC SAFETY



Vance Smith

GDOT Commissioner



Colonel Bill Hitchens

DPS Commissioner

Date: 6-1-11

Date: 6-9-11

ENDORSED, AGREED and EXECUTED THIS _____ DAY of _____, 2011.



Governor, State of Georgia