



## Georgia's Towing and Recovery Incentive Program

### TRIP

#### Background

The Texas Transportation Institute cites Atlanta as the third most congested city in the United States. Each traveler in Metro Atlanta loses an incredible 57 hours a year to traffic delays. And every year, the average Atlanta motorist wastes 40 gallons of fuel while sitting in congestion. This wasted fuel is expensive both financially and environmentally—the resulting unnecessary carbon dioxide emissions have considerable negative impacts on air quality.

Atlanta's demand for highway travel is predicted to continue to grow; the metro area's expected population by 2030 is six million. Commercial vehicles are anticipated to lead the way in traffic volume growth, nearly doubling the traffic caused by cars. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) predicts the volume of freight movement to increase 260% by year 2035<sup>1</sup>, with commercial vehicles carrying 86% of the freight moving through Georgia.

An increase in commercial vehicle traffic inevitably results in an increase in commercial vehicle traffic crashes. Such incidents take a huge toll on Atlanta's interstate traffic. In 2007, it took 269 minutes to open travel lanes after the average tractor trailer incident—that's almost four and a half hours. The annual average delay per peak road traveler is 70 hours. The cost of that congestion for delay time to motorists is estimated at \$2.3 billion per year in metro Atlanta."

More than 50% of the congestion in metro Atlanta is caused by non-recurring incidents such as vehicular collisions. Lengthy clearance times cost lives of first responders and highway workers (including fire, towing, police and other incident responders), while working alongside busy highways. According to the Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), "nearly 40% of law enforcement officers, killed in the line of duty, were killed in traffic related incidents of some sort." In response to these alarming statistics, the Georgia SHSP has identified Traffic Incident Management as one of its key emphasis areas and points to Certification and Training for Towing and Recovery Operators and Multi-Agency Training for Responders as opportunities to improve incident management in Georgia.

## The Solution

In an effort to address safety issues during economically challenging times, the Georgia Towing and Recovery Incentive Program (TRIP), was initiated. TRIP aims to reduce the impact of major traffic incidents involving commercial vehicles, in Metro Atlanta, by meeting an aggressive clearance goal of 90 minutes or less. TRIP is a collaborative effort among GDOT, FHWA, the I-95 Corridor Coalition, and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), in close coordination with the Traffic Incident Management Enhancement (TIME) Task Force. In January 2008, TRIP was implemented and pays qualified TRIP companies a monetary bonus for clearing commercial vehicle wrecks within 90 minutes. The key purpose of the Program is to facilitate quick and safe clearance of commercial vehicle crashes by improving towing procedures.

## Requirements

TRIP is based on a comprehensive set of guidelines designed to ensure that well-trained, competent operators with proper heavy duty equipment are dispatched to large commercial vehicle incidents, having a significant impact on major interstate traffic. Most notably, the State of Georgia has created a certification program for heavy duty recovery towers. This certification includes two levels – Level I Operator and Level II Supervisor. Level I Operators are required to have 16 hours of TRIP Level I Towing and Recovery Training, and approved endorsements in Haz-Mat, MUTCD Flagger, NIMS 700 and Traffic Incident Management Practices. Level II Supervisors must have the Operator training plus 16 hours of Level II TRIP Supervisor training and an additional 8 hours of Haz-Mat training and NIMS 100. In order to participate in the program, towing companies must submit a detailed application and undergo yard inspections, verifying that they have the required equipment and complete training records documenting the required training certification for their personnel.

The I-95 Corridor Coalition partnered with the program to provide training in accordance with the Georgia Open Roads Policy, TIME Taskforce certification exam and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The Coalition funded the initial delivery of TRIP Level I-Operator and Level II-Supervisor training courses for all responder disciplines. Each course lasts two (2) days and includes both classroom and hands-on instruction.

In 2007, GDOT went through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process that resulted in the selection of WreckMaster® as the certified trainer for TRIP Level I and Level II courses. The selection process entailed:

- 1) Developing a certification process;
- 2) Determining the criteria and course requirements;
- 3) Selecting qualified trainers; and
- 4) Negotiating a competitive price per course.

These courses are available and can be hosted in any Coalition State.



The courses include “Traffic Incident Management and Quick Clearance” practices for towing and recovery. Sample topics include:

- ▲ Single lane up-righting of a loaded tractor trailer. (wreckers and the casualty within a 24 foot lateral space)
- ▲ Multiple techniques for the relocation of overturned heavy trucks, including tractor trailers from travel lanes while loaded. (100 feet minimum)
- ▲ Safe work zone setup utilizing, at a minimum, advanced warning signs and an arrow board and traffic cones as outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Chapter 6-I.
- ▲ Containment and mitigation of accidental discharges of motor vehicle fluids (non-cargo)—primarily diesel fuel, including application of traction enhancement material.
- ▲ Clearance of spilled cargo and debris at large crash scenes. (utilizing equipment with a bucket and a broom)

## Benefits

TRIP has been enormously successful in dramatically reducing the average duration of commercial vehicle incidents in Metro Atlanta: from 269 minutes in 2007, to 106 minutes in 2008, 89 minutes in 2009, 117 minutes in 2010 and 105 minutes in 2011. Thanks to TRIP, many Atlanta motorists now have three additional hours that they can invest into more worthy activities, such as working, helping their children with homework, taking care of elderly parents or volunteering in their communities.

Recently, an independent study calculated an 11:1 benefit-cost ratio of the program. With a benefit-to-cost ratio of 11:1, TRIP has demonstrated an obvious monetary value. Furthermore, roadways are cleared faster, which creates a measurable reduction in vehicle hours of delay. The average savings per incident is \$456,216. According to the study, TRIP has reduced the incident cost by 71% compared to the cost before using the program.

The implementation of TRIP has created an environment where the towing and recovery operator is a valued team member at an incident scene. The program provides a sense of purpose and teamwork for all responders. Towing companies are rewarded for assisting safe, quick clearance of an incident by responding with the right equipment and qualified operators.

Notably, TRIP’s goal of reducing the clearance time of large commercial incidents also reduces the cost of these incidents in terms of lost time, wasted fuel, and excess emissions.

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<sup>i</sup> Statewide Freight & Logistics Plan, April 29, 2010.

