

# FACE IT: Report Slides



Law Enforcement Officer – Motor Vehicle

## Sergeant Struck by a Motor Vehicle on Interstate Highway— New Mexico (NIOSH LEO 2014-01)



# Summary

- On December 5, 2013, a 47-year-old sheriff's office sergeant was fatally injured when he was struck by a motorist while investigating several motor vehicle crashes on an interstate highway.
- The sergeant had been dispatched in response to reports of multiple, minor motor vehicle crashes under blizzard conditions.
- Disabled vehicles were situated on the shoulders of the northbound and southbound interstate lanes, as well as in the median.



Looking southbound on the interstate; conditions immediately prior to a vehicle striking the sergeant. (dashcam courtesy of the sheriff department)



# Summary



Incident site looking south; note gentle down-slope to north end of bridge.  
(NIOSH photograph)

- Officers from state and county law enforcement agencies had responded to the scene.
- During the response, the sergeant crossed the highway to speak to other officers.
- He was walking along the northbound shoulder, facing traffic, when a passing motorist lost control of his vehicle and slid onto the shoulder, striking the sergeant.
- After stabilization by fire and rescue personnel at the scene, the sergeant was transported to a nearby Level 1 trauma center, where he succumbed to his injuries the following day.



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# Contributing Factors

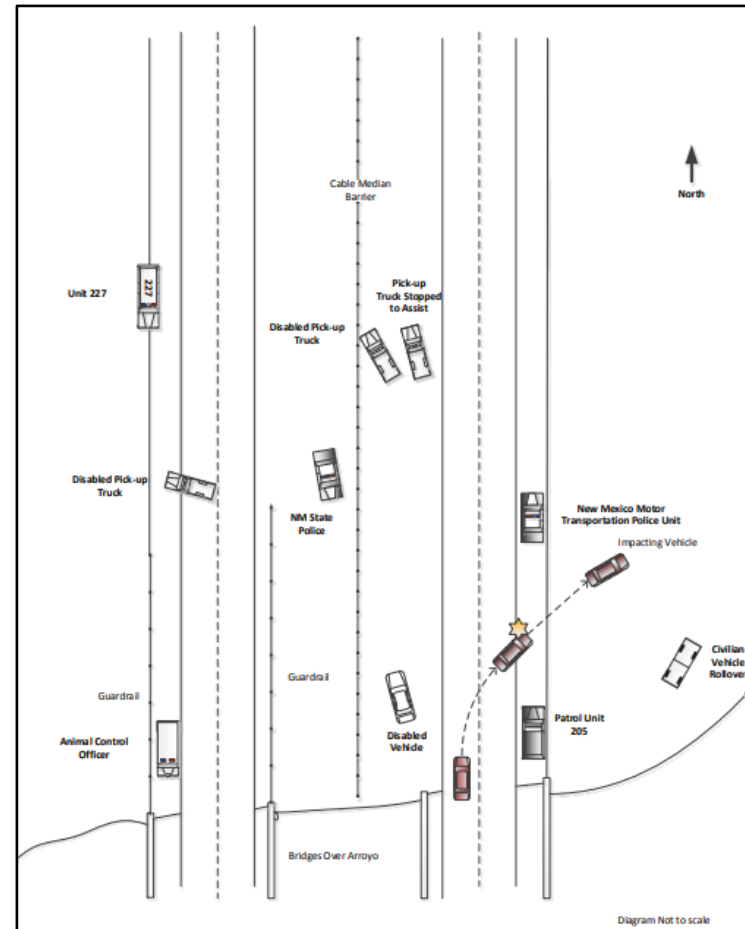
- Weather—the occurrence of severe weather with little or no warning, causing low visibility and icy road surfaces for motorists
- Motorist—not moving into the left lane and/or slowing to a speed permitting a complete stop if required
- Scene management, traffic control—multiple, minor motor vehicle crashes in the same location within a short period of time, limited resources to commit to response
- Low-frequency, high-risk event—the number and proximity of weather-related crashes in the area was unusual



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# Recommendations

- Law enforcement agencies should consider employing continuous size-ups by an officer in position to monitor the entire response scene and assess and manage the risks of operating at a highway/roadway incident.
- Law enforcement agencies consider implementing the Incident Command System when responding to roadside emergencies.
- Law enforcement agencies should ensure that officers are provided with temporary traffic control devices and that additional traffic control resources are available to respond to escalating incidents.



Locations of vehicles at the time the sergeant was struck.



# Recommendations



- Law enforcement agencies should ensure that officers wear suitable high-visibility, retro-reflective vests when operating at highway/roadway incidents.
- State, county, and municipal authorities should consider developing pre-incident plans and the use of traffic incident management systems in response to highway/roadway incidents.

Dashcam view of scene prior to incident from northbound MTD unit minutes prior to the incident. Note Number of disabled and responding vehicles.  
(dashcam courtesy of sheriff department)



# Recommendations

- Law enforcement agencies should ensure that all members receive training for conducting emergency operations at highway/roadway incidents.
- State, county and municipal authorities should consider implementing public awareness campaigns to inform motorists of the risks that law enforcement officers face while operating along the roadside and of the need to follow move-over laws.



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Law Enforcement Officer  
Vehicle Struck-by Investigation

Division of Safety Research 1095 Willowdale Road Morgantown, WV 26505 304.285.5916


LEO 2014-01  
January 21, 2016


**Sergeant Struck by a Motor Vehicle on Interstate Highway—  
New Mexico**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
On December 5, 2013, a 47-year-old sheriff's office sergeant was fatally injured when he was struck by a motorist while investigating several motor vehicle crashes on an interstate highway. The sergeant had been dispatched in response to reports of multiple, minor motor vehicle crashes under blizzard conditions. Disabled vehicles were situated on the shoulders of the northbound and southbound interstate lanes, as well as in the median. Officers from state and county law enforcement agencies had responded to the scene. During the response, the sergeant crossed the highway to speak to other officers. He was walking along the northbound shoulder, facing traffic, when a passing motorist lost control of his vehicle and slid onto the shoulder, striking the sergeant. After stabilization by fire and rescue personnel at the scene, the sergeant was transported to a nearby Level 1 trauma center, where he succumbed to his injuries the following day.

**CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**  
Key contributing factors identified in this investigation include:

- **Weather**—the occurrence of severe weather with little or no warning, causing low visibility and icy road surfaces for motorists
- **Motorist**—not moving into the left lane and/or slowing to a speed permitting a complete stop if required
- **Scene management, traffic control**—multiple, minor motor vehicle crashes in the same location within a short period of time, limited resources to commit to response
- **Low-frequency, high-risk event**—the number and proximity of weather-related crashes in the area was unusual





**Looking southbound on the interstate; conditions immediately prior to a vehicle striking the sergeant. (dashcam courtesy of the sheriff department)**

Download the full report: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/leo/pdfs/L201401.pdf>





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