

FACE IT: Report Visual Extension



Officer Struck By a Motorhome While Establishing Temporary Traffic Control on Interstate—Tennessee (NIOSH LEO 2016-01)

Summary

- 25-year-old police officer was fatally injured when he was struck by a motorhome and dragged under the trailer it was pulling on a four-lane interstate highway.
- The officer had responded to a jackknifed and overturned pickup/trailer combination that was blocking an entrance ramp to the interstate northbound lanes.



Initial incident the officers responded to, looking southbound in the northbound lanes.

(Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Police Department.)

Summary

- To assist with traffic control, the officer positioned his patrol unit south of the entrance ramp in lane three, and a Tennessee Department of Transportation help truck operator positioned his vehicle next to the patrol unit to block the shoulder and lane four.



The incident scene showing the position of the patrol unit and the help truck.

(Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Police Department.)



Summary

- The officer and help truck operator were standing between their vehicles, when a motorhome pulling a trailer approached the scene in lane three (lane second from the right).
- The motorhome and trailer sideswiped the help truck and struck the officer. The officer was dragged underneath the trailer for 116 feet before the motor home came to a stop. He died at the scene.

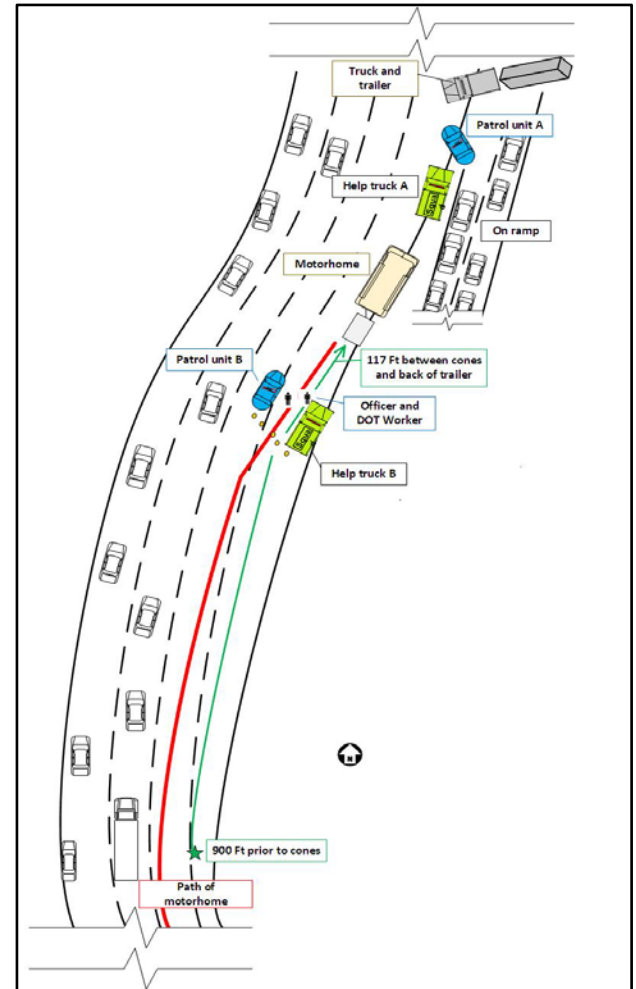


Diagram of roadway where crash occurred.
 (Not to Scale)



Contributing Factors

- Motorhome driver did not slow down and merge left.
- Positioning of patrol unit.
- Law enforcement officer standing in partially open lane.
- Law enforcement officer looking away from oncoming traffic; discussing traffic control with help truck operator.
- Delay in updating dynamic message sign.



Recommendations

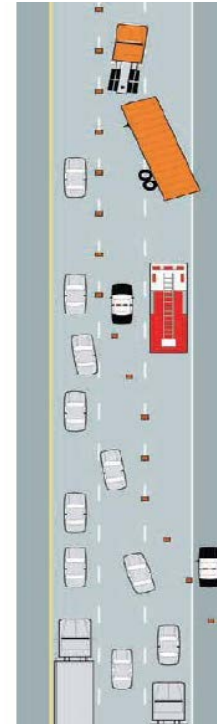
- State, county, and municipal authorities should consider promoting public awareness campaigns to inform motorists of the risks that law enforcement officers face while operating along the roadside and of the need to follow “Move Over” laws.
- Law enforcement officers and other emergency responders should identify and move to a safe area within an established temporary traffic control zone that minimizes their exposure to oncoming vehicle traffic and should maintain situational awareness.



Recreation of motorist visibility; 900 feet south of crash site.
(Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Police Department.)

Recommendations

- Law enforcement agencies should consider developing a standard operating procedure that includes guidance on how to properly establish a temporary traffic control plan, including advance warning and transition areas for highway/roadway emergency incidents.
- Emergency responders should consider positioning patrol units and other emergency vehicles as they arrive on-scene to maximize the protected work zone for the emergency responders.



Example of temporary traffic control tapered lane closure for highway/roadway emergency incidents.
(Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation Emergency Traffic Control and Scene Management Guidelines [WisDOT 2014])



Law Enforcement Officer – Motor Vehicle

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Law Enforcement Officer
Vehicle Struck-by Investigation

Division of Safety Research 1005 Wilkowdale Road Morgantown, WV 26505 304 285 5918
LEO 2016-01
November 7, 2017

Officer Struck By a Motorhome While Establishing Temporary Traffic Control on Interstate—Tennessee


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 10, 2014, a 25-year-old police officer was fatally injured when he was struck by a motorhome and drag under the trailer it was pulling on a four-lane interstate highway. The officer had responded to a jackknifed and overturned pickup/trailer combination that was blocking an entrance ramp to the interstate northbound lanes. To assist with traffic control, the officer positioned his patrol unit south of the entrance ramp in lane three, and a Tennessee Department of Transportation help truck operator positioned his vehicle next to the patrol unit to block the shoulder and lane four. The officer and help truck operator were standing between their vehicles, near the help truck's driver's side door, when a motorhome pulling a trailer approached the scene in lane three (lane second from the right). The driver of the motorhome reported the speed and volume of traffic in lanes one and two prevented him from moving to the left; as a result, he attempted to drive between the police car and the help truck. The help truck operator saw the oncoming motorhome, yelled to the officer, and ran out of the way; the officer was unable to do so. The motorhome and trailer sideswiped the help truck and struck the officer. The officer was dragged underneath the trailer for 116 feet before the motor home came to a stop. He died at the scene.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Key contributing factors identified in this investigation include:

- Motorhome driver did not slow down and merge left.
- Positioning of patrol unit.
- Law enforcement officer standing in partially open lane.
- Law enforcement officer looking away from oncoming traffic, discussing traffic control with help truck operator.
- Delay in updating dynamic message sign.



The incident scene showing the position of the patrol unit and the help truck.
(Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Police Department.)

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