

On Patrol

Official Newsletter of the Safety Service Patrol Industry Association

Vol. 1, Issue 2 — Fall 2019

Are Safety Service Patrol Professionals “First Responders”?

The phrase “First Responder” has become popular in recent years as the important work these professionals perform is displayed in the news media daily. From natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods to manmade incidents such as highway crashes and mass shootings, First Responders are front and center in keeping our nation safe and saving lives.

Although “First Responder” is now a household phrase, is there a single definition that describes exactly who qualifies as a first responder nationwide? Research indicates that the Federal government has largely relied on states and local jurisdictions to make this determination, and we have found some 37 states that have defined “First Responder” in various ways.

One of the goals of the SSPIA is to “promote a higher level of recognition” for Safety Service Patrols, and this includes improving the lives and well-being of these First Responders. While enacting legislative changes will help move this agenda forward and is a long-term goal of the SSPIA, are there benefits that SSP professionals can access that other similarly situated professionals enjoy today? The answer is YES.

ID.me is a company that works with government agencies and individual companies to access discounts provided by various product and services vendors in the marketplace. Personnel from entities such as the military and law enforcement provide identification online, and ID.me quickly verifies that the organization to which they belong has registered and employees are provided access. Once granted access, ID.me provides an account to the employee that can be used online as well as at stores, restaurants, automobile companies and others.

This is not an advertisement for ID.me – we simply want to point out to SSP leadership that there is a vehicle that can be used to help improve the lives and well-being of their staff. We will continue to work to identify other entities that can provide similar or other benefits for Safety Service Patrol Professionals.

A related question is how can we get Safety Service Patrol Professionals officially defined as First Responders in all jurisdictions in which they work? Currently only certain states have their Safety Service/Highway/Freeway patrols (SSP/HERO/FSP) accepted as first responders but it is not listed in writing like Medical or Law Enforcement are called out in legislation. Many define the qualification as having been trained to provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR/AED). Many of our SSP Operators have, in fact, received this training, but it has not been recognized legislatively. Your hard-working SSPIA team will continue to explore this issue, and please keep on the lookout for future articles on this topic.



On Patrol

Official Newsletter of the Safety Service Patrol Industry Association

Vol. 1, Issue 2 — Fall 2019

North Carolina DOT — Traffic Incident Management Training (TIM) Track

While many Service Safety Patrol organizations struggle to find a suitable location to conduct training in a realistic environment, North Carolina has found the perfect solution. After careful consideration and extensive research, the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) Incident Management Assistance Patrol (IMAP) Trainers designed a state-of-the-art TIM Training Track that includes a variety of roadway conditions and features that are encountered by first responders throughout the state.



The track is quite expansive and was designed to accommodate a full scale, multi-discipline exercise without disrupting normal operations on a corridor. Tucked away on the grounds of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol's (NCSHP) Driving Facility, the multi-disciplinary TIM Track is tentatively scheduled to be completed and available for training in mid-September 2019, well ahead of the Nov. 28, 2019 construction completion date.

- To encourage interaction and adequate training opportunities across all disciplines, the track boasts of the following features:
- Multiple lanes: practice incident work zone applications on a variety of freeway cross-sections (2 to 5 lanes) that represent urban and rural freeways
- Weave: practicing IMAP vehicle maneuvers through a weave section; application of incident work zones at a weave
- On/Off Ramp: practice safely entering and exiting access-controlled highways; use of on/off ramps within an incident work zone to apply closures or detours
- Vertical Curve: practice setting up TTC in mountainous terrain and areas of limited sight distance
- Cross Over: practice driving maneuvers required for safely crossing the median ditch and changing driving directions
- Turn-bay: practice incident work zone applications with a dedicated turn lane configuration; maneuvering around an incident in a turn-bay
- Guardrail: practice techniques to up-right overturned vehicles; clearing debris during harsh weather events
- Barrier: practice incident work zone set-ups in vicinity of barriers (could be standard freeway cross-section or construction work zone with narrower clearance); practice placement of the IMAP truck with minimal shoulder for motorist assist; and practice the placing of stop sticks for NCSHP
- Drain: practice strategies for keeping a hazardous spill from contaminating water source

Most importantly, we are optimistic that our TIM Training Track will prove helpful in improving on-scene communication, reducing the number first responders injured while on the scene of an incident, aiding us to realize our incident clearance goals, and improving TIM activities across the state.

On Patrol

Official Newsletter of the Safety Service Patrol Industry Association

Vol. 1, Issue 2 — Fall 2019

Outsource or Not to Outsource – How Do Agencies Decide?

Across the nation, transportation agencies deliver mobility to the public using labor, equipment and materials funded through public sources. Each agency determines its internal organizational structure; departmental responsibilities, policies and procedures; and how the required work products and services will actually be delivered to maximize efficiency while staying within budgetary guidelines. The means and methods by which the products and services are delivered, whether utilizing internal or external resources, are determined by the management of each agency, and are based upon many factors unique to each agency.

As it involves labor, equipment and materials and, in many cases, is the only daily contact the public has with a Department of Transportation, the decision of whether to outsource Safety Service Patrol services is a complex one. The decision factors for outsourcing SSP services typically include:

Cost – Can these services be delivered more cost-effectively by a third party than by the agency itself?

Staffing restrictions – Many agencies have a goal to manage the network with fewer staff and are seeking opportunities to outsource work to achieve this objective.

Risk transfer – SSP operates in an uncontrolled environment which carries risk of bodily harm to operators and property damage to vehicles and equipment. Some agencies have used outsourcing to transfer these risks to the private sector.

Budgetary certainty – Agencies can choose to contract SSP services at a fixed price, thereby establishing a budgetary ceiling that can be held for multiple years.

Funding flexibility – As funding can be subjected to unexpected reductions, for many agencies it is less cumbersome to reduce contractual expenses (staff and/or scope of work) than to reduce in-house expenses.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has elected to keep its urban Atlanta SSP operation in-house and outsource its statewide operation. The CHAMP service, initiated in 2017, fulfilled a need for a safety service patrol on interstate highways outside of Atlanta. GDOT was challenged to deploy the service without adding headcount while keeping spending in line. After internal review and discussion, GDOT management determined that the most feasible way to accomplish this was to outsource the new service to the private sector. As with any major decision, results will continue to be reviewed to see if expected outcomes are being realized (headcount, budgetary adherence, service performance, etc.).



Agencies frequently make in-house vs. outsource decisions for different types of services. In the case of Safety Service Patrols, each agency must use its best judgment and criteria appropriate to its situation to determine what fits its needs.

On Patrol

Official Newsletter of the Safety Service Patrol Industry Association

Vol. 1, Issue 2 — Fall 2019

SSPIA Activities Update

Since our inaugural newsletter was published in early June, the Safety Service Patrol Industry Association (SSPIA) has had a busy summer. Here are a few highlights:

Several members attended the ITS Americas First Responder Day on June 5 in Washington, and discussed the SSPIA with various interested parties. Member attendees included Jason Josey (Georgia DOT), Sam McClain (Travelers Marketing) and Tom Clark (Parsons). Dozens of copies of the inaugural newsletter were distributed.

On June 26, Jim Austrich of FHWA invited Jason Josey of GDOT to speak about the SSPIA on his monthly Traffic Incident Management call.

Sam McClain of Travelers Marketing invited Jason Josey to speak about the SSPIA on their SafeHighways webinar on August 1.

GDOT HERO Manager Jason Josey participated in two conference calls with operations representatives from Texas DOT on Aug. 21.

Lacy Word of Tennessee DOT had Jason Josey make a presentation on the SSPIA at a First Responder meeting held in Tennessee on Aug. 22.

As a result of the presentations and outreach, we have added over 10 public and private entities to the growing list of SSPIA members and friends. This outreach effort will continue as requests for SSPIA presentations have been received for this fall. We are also planning a general update conference call to which all members and friends will be invited.

We encourage all SSP Industry Leaders to spread the word about the association, its mission and purpose. Please contact Tom Clark at Thomas.clark@parsons.com to get on our mailing list or to take an active role in the group.

Going Above and Beyond — SSP Operator Heroism in the Line of Duty

Ricky Martin, Roseville – MnDOT FIRST Driver

A man was walking down a freeway ramp back onto the highway when Minnesota State Trooper Sturgill confronted him. As Trp. Sturgill told him to walk to the front of the squad car, the man charged towards him and began punching him in the face, head and arms. Both went to the ground, with the man on top of Trp. Sturgill and continuing to punch him.

FIRST driver Ricky Martin arrived on scene and immediately ran to assist Trp. Sturgill. He tackled the man off Trp. Sturgill and helped hold him down. Trp. Sturgill was able to get one handcuff on, but the man was actively resisting by trying to spin away and kicking. It took both of them to hold him down until other officers arrived to assist, and it then took several officers to get him handcuffed.

Mr. Martin did not hesitate to assist Trp. Sturgill and ignored the danger of physical confrontation. Without his help, it's very possible that Trp. Sturgill would have been more seriously hurt than being punched a few times.



Have a great SSP story? Please send it to Thomas Clark at thomas.clark@parsons.com.

Safety Service Patrol Industry Association Founders

Georgia DOT

Minnesota DOT

Maryland DOT

North Carolina DOT

Parsons

Tennessee DOT

Travelers Marketing

Contact:

Thomas Clark, Parsons

thomas.clark@parsons.com