



IAFF SAFETY ADVISORY

FIRE FIGHTER ROADWAY OPERATION HAZARDS

OCTOBER 2026

Fire apparatus are struck on North American roadways every day, and fire fighters and emergency medical workers continue to be injured or killed at roadway incidents. Fire fighters must stay alert throughout these operations and take steps to reduce and manage the risks of passing vehicles.

This Safety Advisory covers roadway operation hazards and recent incidents, including survival considerations and additional resources.

RECENT EVENT

A Mansfield, Texas, (IAFF Local 3599) fire department engine was struck by a vehicle on the morning of Oct. 4, 2026, while it was positioned as a protective barrier at the scene of a previous accident on southbound State Highway 360.

The incident happened at 1:30 a.m. as Engine 5 had been intentionally placed to block traffic and protect first responders working to clear an earlier wreck.

Three crew members were inside the fire engine at the time of the crash. All were wearing their seat belts and reported that they were okay.

FIRE FIGHTER ROADWAY SURVIVAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Apparatus Positioning:** Position fire apparatus at a 45-degree angle toward traffic to create a physical protective block ("lane plus one") and deflect striking vehicles away from the active work zone.
- **High-Visibility Vests:** Always wear an ANSI-compliant, high-visibility traffic vest when operating on a roadway outside of immediate fire suppression.
- **Face Oncoming Traffic:** Maintain constant situational awareness and have personnel equipped with a portable radio (to issue urgent messages on the scene operating fire ground channel) and face oncoming traffic when working near moving vehicles.
- **Lighting Management:** Reduce unnecessary front-facing white or high-intensity emergency lights once traffic is merged to prevent blinding approaching drivers.
- **Traffic Control Devices:** Set up an upstream temporary traffic control zone using cones or flares to taper vehicles away from the scene early.
- **Advance Warning:** Digital alerting is available today, such as HAAS Alert and other technology, as well as safely placed emergency vehicles "upstream" of the incident scene, with rear warning lights activated.
- **Personnel Accountability:** If not performing a specific task, members should be staged in a safe area.
- **Road Shut Down:** Coordinate with law enforcement to ensure the scene is safe (for all personnel and civilians), which includes roadway shut down.
- **Continuous Size-Up:** From the initial arriving officer until the incident is terminated, continuously size-up the scene to determine what other risks or hazards can be mitigated.
- **Training:** Training on your policies and procedures must occur at the probationary level and continue as an annual activity for all members. (See Additional Resources for suggested policies and training.)



IAFF SAFETY ADVISORY

FIRE FIGHTER ROADWAY OPERATION HAZARDS

OCTOBER 2026

- **Stats:** As of October 2026, 27 first responders in the United States have died in the line of duty in struck-by incidents. Read more about this statistic [here](#).
- **Assume** the motoring public will not see you and your members, and take every defensive and protective measure possible.

CASE STUDY

On Oct. 11, 2018, Lieutenant Brad Clark of Hanover County, VA Local 4202 was killed while on scene of an initial crash on Interstate 295 during Tropical Storm Michael. The driver of a tractor-trailer rear-ended the engine company that was parked at the scene of the crash with its emergency lights on. The impact pinned Clark under the fire truck's front tire.

Clark was wearing his full PPE and reflective vest at the time of the incident.

He saw the tractor-trailer coming and warned his crew, an action credited with saving their lives. Two crew members suffered life-threatening injuries.

Related Coverage:

- [News clip](#): A message from Clark's wife
- [‘My lieutenant didn’t come home’: Widow shares powerful story of loss](#) (FireRescue1)
- [IC-to-IC Discussion](#): Hanover County, VA Vehicle Accident (NFFFTV)
- [Hanover County \(VA\) Roadway LODD](#) (Fire Engineering)

SUMMARY

Operating in or near moving traffic is among the greatest risks IAFF members face. Struck-by incidents are a leading cause of line-of-duty injuries and deaths.

Every highway and roadway scene exposes members to passing motorists who may be distracted, impaired, or unable to react in time. Fire fighters and emergency medical workers must maintain high levels of situational awareness during roadway scenes to better protect themselves and those on the scene.

Company officers should remind fire fighters to exit the apparatus safely (out and away from moving traffic) and maintain full awareness of area traffic.

Incident commanders, including first-arriving company officers, should ensure they have adequate staffing to manage the emergency, supervise tasks, and control scene safety. This may include additional resources, such as a full-alarm assignment for scene management and safety.

Law enforcement personnel will want roadways reopened as quickly as possible, but that must not be done at an increased risk to scene-operating fire fighters, response personnel, patients, and civilians. Learning law enforcement policies and meeting local personnel ahead of time can make coordination on scene smoother.



IAFF SAFETY ADVISORY

FIRE FIGHTER ROADWAY OPERATION HAZARDS

OCTOBER 2026

IMAGES



Mansfield, TX



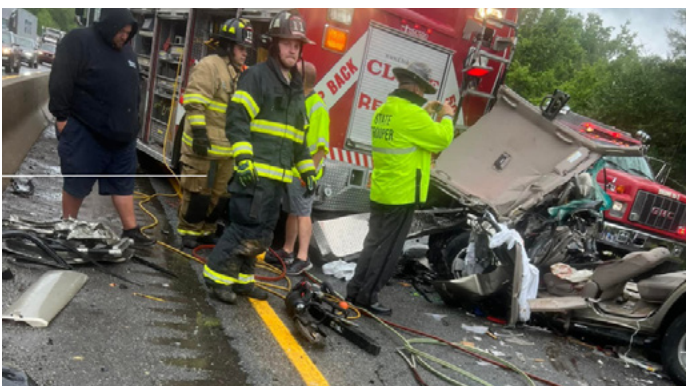
Hanover County, VA



Palo Alto, CA



Montgomery County, MD



Clyde, NC



Culver City, CA



IAFF SAFETY ADVISORY

FIRE FIGHTER ROADWAY OPERATION HAZARDS

OCTOBER 2026

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Responder Safety Learning Network](#)
 - [Crash Responder Safety Week](#)
 - [Educating the Public](#)
 - [Sample Policies/Procedures](#)

Federal Highway Training Resources (U.S. Department of Transportation)

- [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways](#)
- [Responder and Motorist Safety](#)