

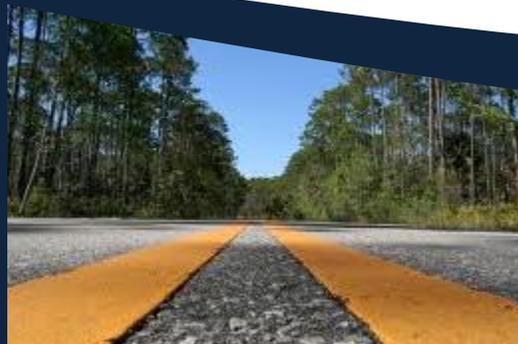


# TIM NEWSLETTER

MARCH/APRIL 2012  
5<sup>th</sup> EDITION



ALACHUA COUNTY, FL





## TEAM UPDATE

If there was ever a doubt about the Alachua Traffic Incident Management Team understanding the value of “team work”, the actions and response to the crashes occurring January 29 on Interstate 75 proved we work as a team to reach our mission and vision statements.

At our meeting on February 8, all responders reported their satisfaction with the team work involved. The fires, fog and numerous crashes tested our team and we were able to stay focused on a quick clearance. As a productive team should, we were able to learn from each other and continue to advance in reaching our goals. Ryan Crist, FDOT TMC Supervisor, captures the incident and teamwork involved as follows:

*“January 29 was the beginning of a 48-hour period where tragedy struck and heroes raised from the smoke and fog in Alachua County. When dealing with Mother Nature, the best one can do is go with the facts that are in front of you. We have all been trained to assess the situation and make the best decision on the information that is available. Even when these best practices are used, Mother Nature can change her mind at any minute and conditions may change. That was the case that Saturday night. To no one’s fault, Mother Nature shifted gears and unavoidable crashes occurred.*

*What happened was a tragedy but what occurred after the fact was a display of team work, training, courage, bravery and hard work. The way all those incident responders thrust themselves into the situation, risking their own safety to secure the roadway and protect the traveling public was commendable. Resources were shared and deployed through various agencies, roles were expanded, sleep was not an option and team work kept this tragedy contained to the initial crashes.*

*Fingers weren’t pointed and team work carried these brave men and women to reduce secondary crashes and kept traffic moving as well as the arterial roadways would allow them. With numerous fires in the area, the job that was done was extraordinary. Personnel and resources were shared on the city, county, district and statewide level. To all of those who had a hand in the response, thank you! To the friends and family of those who lost a loved one, our thoughts are with you.”*

### ***A special thank you to all team members!***

#### **MISSION:**

The Florida Department of Transportation District Two’s Traffic Incident Management Teams through partnering efforts strive to continuously reduce incident scene clearance times to deter congestion and improve safety. The Teams’ objective is to exceed the Open Roads Policy thus ensuring mobility, economic prosperity, and quality of life.

#### **VISION:**

Through cooperation, communication and training the Teams intend to reduce incident scene clearance times by 10% each year through 2015.

#### **Upcoming Training: Please mark your calendars.**

##### **April 11** (regular meeting)

Hazardous spill training (including guidelines and procedures)

Presented by the State Department of Environmental Protection

##### **May 15 -16**

FHWA Advanced Traffic Incident Management Workshop for Mid-Level Managers

FDOT Urban Office Training Facility

#### **Alachua TIM Meeting Schedule**

**APRIL 11, 2012**

**JUNE 13, 2012**

**AUGUST 8, 2012**

**OCTOBER 10, 2012**

**DECEMBER 12, 2012**

**Donna R. Danson, FDOT D2  
ITS Operations Project Manager**





## EMERGENCY OPERATIONS UPDATE

By the time you read this article, we will have begun daylight saving time and it will be less than two months until we enter hurricane season. There has been a lot of activity in the emergency management community since our last newsletter. Below is a sampling of things going on:

**Tornados:** Dozens of tornados have wreaked havoc around the country in the past two months. Several states have suffered the effects of major F3 to F5 tornados. Dozens of lives have been lost, businesses and schools destroyed, people's lives changed forever and huge economic impacts experienced. So far, Florida has been spared from this type of event. However, we are not immune. I have read various articles that state Florida as the tornado and lightning capital of the world. While we may have the most tornados, at least we don't have the most powerful. Most of our tornados are of lesser strength. While this is a blessing, we cannot ignore the danger of any size tornado. Tornado events should be a part of every agency's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and also a part of everyone's Personal Response Plan (PRP). If you do not have a PRP, now is the perfect time to prepare one. If you need assistance, please let me know and I will send you a guideline to help create one.

**Wildfire:** We have experienced several wildfires in our area the past few months. The main problem with the wildfires for us is the smoke. The smoke itself is bad and can extremely impair a driver's vision on the roadway, but when the smoke is mixed with fog and/or the darkness of night it makes driving conditions even worse. We have had to deal with smoke from numerous fires in Alachua, Clay, Levy and Putnam counties. The most notable has been the Paynes Prairie fire that has been the blame for the I-75 crash that claimed 11 lives. Fires in Clay and Putnam counties have destroyed homes, as well as having caused multiple and daily road closures. Wildfires occur several ways: lightning strike, arson or accidental. We cannot control lightning. The other ways we can control and prevent. If you must start a fire, whether a campfire, a fire for land clearing or simply burning yard debris, please follow all local regulations. Contact your local forestry office to obtain the necessary permit and follow their instructions and requirement for safety equipment on site. Report suspicious activity to authorities. By being vigilant, hopefully we can prevent future tragedies caused by wildfire.

**Geomagnetic Storm:** While this is not a new phenomenon; it is unfamiliar to many of us. A geomagnetic storm is sometimes referred to as solar flares or sunspots. The geomagnetic storm can cause severe damage to electronics that we have become accustomed to using in our daily lives. Below is an excerpt from a document the Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) has created in an attempt to educate emergency managers about this type of event. It is rather lengthy, but it will give you a good explanation of what a geomagnetic storm is and what damage it can do.

*"Our sun is the star of the solar system. It is surrounded by a "Corona" of hot gases with temperatures in excess of 95,500 degrees centigrade produced by the fusion of hydrogen into helium atoms. These great explosions generate flares or coronal ejections that can be launched millions of miles from the sun in all directions into space. Some extreme "hotspots" are known as "sunspots" and they generate a solar wind, also known as a "geomagnetic storm" or cloud of magnetic field which interacts with the Earth's magnetic field. The frequency of which geomagnetic storms occur increases and decreases with the Sunspot cycle. In 1989, a severe geomagnetic storm caused the collapse of the Hydro-Quebec power grid in a matter of seconds as equipment protective relays tripped in a cascading sequence of events which left six million people without power for nine hours, and resulted in significant economic loss.*

*A geomagnetic storm has three phases: an initial phase, also known as a storm sudden commencement (SSC) and may last several minutes; a main phase, which may last typically between 2 and 8 hours; and the recovery phase, when it begins to reduce its effect and may last between 8 hours and 7 days. The Earth is mostly protected from the solar wind, due to its magnetic field, which deflects most of the charged particles. Some of these particles are trapped in the Earth's upper atmosphere also known as the ionosphere and are seen from the ground as an "aurora" (borealis and australis) depending on its location.*

***Continued on the next page.***

**Geomagnetic Storm (continued):**

*From August 28 until September 2, 1859, numerous sunspots and solar flares were observed on the Sun, the largest flare occurring on September 1. This is referred to as the 1859 solar super storm or the Carrington Event. It was speculated that this Coronal mass ejection (CME), associated with the flare, was launched from the Sun and reached the Earth within 18 hours- a trip that normally takes three to four days. These two events present us with scenarios of “What if...” A leading theoretical physics professor has stated that if this storm were to occur today, it could paralyze the planet. It would destroy power stations, satellites, communications, radar, etc. resulting in one to two trillion dollars in damage. These super storms occur every one to two hundred years and since the last one was in 1859, we are due to experience the next one in the near future. There is no doubt that GMS can have a devastating effect on infrastructure from power transmission lines, high-voltage transformers, electric generators, pipelines, oil gas drilling operations, undersea communication cables, telephone, telegraph networks and railways. Without electricity at the local level, gas stations could not operate, ATM machines could not function, and the basic utilities including light, water, heat, air conditioning, etc., would be affected.*

*Many communication systems use the ionosphere to reflect radio signals over long distances. As a result, ionospheric storms can affect radio communication at all latitudes. Telephone, ground-to-air, ship-to-shore, shortwave broadcast and amateur radio would be severely disrupted. Damage to communication satellites can disrupt non-terrestrial telephone, television, radio, and internal links. The National Academy of Sciences reported in 2008 on possible scenarios of widespread disruption in the 2012-2013 solar peaks. During the GMS of 1989, four of the U.S. Navy’s navigational satellites had to be taken out of service.*

*Regarding electric grids, when magnetic fields move about the vicinity of a conductor such as a wire, a geomagnetically induced current is produced in the conductor. This occurs most notably during a GMS on long transmission lines. Power companies, which operate long transmission lines, are thus, subject to damage by this effect. European grids use much shorter transmission cables, which are less vulnerable to damage. According to a study, known as the Forbes Magnetic Storm Data Project, a storm comparative to that of 1921, 130 million people would be left without power and 350 transformers would be severely damaged, with a cost in excess of \$2 trillion dollars.”*

So, as you can see, this event could be anything from non-eventful to causing major, life-changing damage. And, like all other natural disasters, it is not preventable. We can only prepare, respond and recover from it. We are already experiencing some mild affects of these storms. Satellite communications have had short periods of shut-downs. Some internet providers have experienced issues. Anything using GPS navigational systems could be affected. This event is real. There are workshops being conducted within the emergency management realm throughout the state on this topic all during March. There will be a statewide tabletop exercise conducted in Melbourne in mid-April to find out just how prepared Florida is to deal with this event. The tabletop exercise will take place after this newsletter is published, but I should have results from the tabletop exercise to share in our next newsletter.

**The Governor’s Hurricane Conference:**

The annual Governor’s Hurricane Conference will be held in Ft. Lauderdale  
May 14 – 18 and I will report on the trainings and workshops in the next newsletter.

***Until then, be prepared and be safe!***





## MAINTENANCE UPDATE

We are well aware of the January 28 - 29 crashes on I-75 and US 441 across Paynes Prairie that involved almost every one of our organizations. It is important for us to realize it showed how well all parties responded and worked together in the aftermath of that tragedy. In the Navy, we used to say, "You fight the way you train." We don't have the luxury of intense, dedicated and coordinated training. What we do though, is use our frequent responses to crashes to analyze how we can improve future responses. That continuous improvement over the past few years is the result of the high degree of coordination and teamwork that the Incident Management Team has fostered. The effectiveness of our January response, under very challenging and stressful climatic and emotional conditions, is a testament to your continuing efforts.

Another situation that received considerable publicity, but minimal mention of our collective participation, was the recent bomb threat at Gainesville High School. I didn't think Phil Mann was going to wish me "Happy Monday" when he called the morning of March 5. I soon found out how right I was. He quickly explained the situation and I approved his request to close Northwest 13<sup>th</sup> Street (US 441) in front of the high school. Five minutes later, he called back and said Gainesville Police Department (GPD) needed 1,000 feet around the school cleared. He asked if we could close Northwest 13<sup>th</sup> Street and his public works personnel would close the local roads. Within one hour, the maintenance of traffic (MOT) was in place. When GPD needed to place a dog and handler on the school roof to conduct a search, a bucket truck was quickly produced. Fortunately this was a false alarm, but again the response was quick, professional and well coordinated.

There was nothing "usual" in either one of these situations. Their common thread was our well-networked team of responders, our abilities to adjust to their specific situations and respond quickly with the appropriate personnel, tools and equipment. I am certain we will continue to be called upon. Even though it may seem like we have "seen it all," we will continue to run into new situations. We just need to challenge ourselves to review our responses and implement pertinent lessons learned into our future responses. We may never be perfect, but that shouldn't stop us from striving for perfection. Someone's life may depend on it!

*Together, we are making a difference.*

**Steve Scanlan, FDOT D2**  
**Gainesville Operations Maintenance Engineer**



## CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

As we travel around in our daily lives, we probably don't think much of railroad crossings until they are closed and we cannot cross and are forced to take a detour. But as inconvenient as these closures are, rest assured they are necessary.

The railroad crossing on State Road 235 between Alachua and La Crosse is scheduled to be replaced and the work will require the road to be totally closed for a week. Local traffic will be allowed to use the state road, but will not be allowed to cross at the railroad.

The total closure is necessary to remove and replace the entire crossing. This particular crossing, which has seen a lot of rail and roadway traffic, is made of asphalt and timbers. This crossing will be replaced with concrete. Once the old crossing has been removed, the new crossing will be built and the rails on either side of the crossing reconnected. The final step in the replacement is the reconstruction and alignment of the approach with the existing road.

This railroad crossing is within the area of State Road 235 that is currently being resurfaced. There is a schedule for each of these steps and provided the weather cooperates – which means no rain this time of year – crews should be able to stay on task and complete within the time limit and may finish ahead of schedule.

The total closure is mandatory because crews are actively working in the area and vehicular traffic cannot cross when the crossing is removed. The Florida Department of Transportation and the local railroad companies work hard to efficiently schedule and coordinate work on crossings as well as communicate the necessary road closures to local residents, travelers and commercial drivers. Detour routes are identified, marked and advertised to help make the closures more bearable.

**Laurie Windham**  
**Atkins, Public Information**





Gainesville/Alachua County

**SMARTTRAFFIC**

Advanced Traffic Management System

## TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT CENTER ACTIVITIES

*The Traffic Management Center is a jointly funded project by: City of Gainesville; Alachua County; University of Florida; and, Florida Department of Transportation. It is operated by the City of Gainesville.*

On January 29, Interstate 75 (I-75) was closed between the Williston Road (S.R. 331) and the Micanopy interchanges. This was due to several traffic crashes that occurred in both the northbound and southbound lanes of I-75 on Paynes Prairie. Traffic Management Center (TMC) staff worked throughout the day to assist with traffic on the diversion routes. TMC staff also posted current incident information on the Smartraffic Website and social media. Many citizens from throughout the state and region found our website and were calling in and asking for detour information and projected length of closure. In addition to referring them to 511, staff was able to provide information to the callers as the TMC was staffed.

Additionally, TMC staff, in conjunction with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) staff recently assisted the Gainesville Police Department (GPD) regarding a bomb threat at Gainesville High School (GHS). GPD received a threat of a device and a possible shooting at GHS via the GPD website. GHS is located adjacent to Northwest 13<sup>th</sup> Street (U.S. 441). It was necessary to close the roadway network surrounding GHS due to the proximity of school buildings to the streets. The student and staff were evacuated to a safe area and the buildings were thoroughly searched. The closure lasted approximately half of the day and TMC staff worked to reroute traffic to the surrounding arterial streets.

TMC staff is also working with FDOT – District Two Information TS office on Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) deployment for I-75 in Alachua County. These projects were recently partially funded via a legislative appropriation and as a result of the Paynes Prairie traffic crashes. Staff continues to design and implement innovative methods for achieving surveillance and monitoring as both short term and long term equipment deployment is to be implemented. Both staffs are also working together to implement a long term solution that can be implemented relatively quickly to connect the City of Gainesville – Traffic Management Center and the FDOT – District Two Traffic Management Center in Jacksonville.

**If you have questions:**

Traffic Management Center

PHONE: (352) 393 - 7960

HOURS OF OPERATION: Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM

WEBSITE: [www.gac-smartraffic.com](http://www.gac-smartraffic.com)

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## ALACHUA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

### DEPUTY DARIN PATTERSON

Alachua County Sheriff's Deputy Darin Patterson has been with the Alachua County Sheriff's Office for more than 16 of his 21 years in law enforcement. The last 14 years, Darin has served on the Sheriff's Office Motorcycle Unit in all capacities. Currently, he is the lead trainer for the unit, heads up the "Beat the Heat" traffic safety program and conducts all local high school traffic safety events and classroom trainings.

On the aspect of training, Darin has learned over the years that riding a motorcycle is wonderful and fun but also very dangerous. He's had a couple of bumps and bruises from riding the bike and he makes sure that basic lifesaving skills are always taught and reinforced in any training he conducts. Darin has conducted local and statewide motorcycle training classes to certify others in the safe and proper use of the police motorcycle. He also teaches local residents so they can obtain their motorcycle license.

If you have ever seen the 44- foot trailer around town that says "Beat the Heat," or have visited the Gainesville Raceway on Wednesday or Saturday nights, you may hear Darin's familiar voice or see his signature smile just before he undertakes the quarter-mile lap in a Sheriff's Office Ford Mustang. This is not a racing program, but a traffic safety program to promote safe driving. Darin makes that extremely clear. As he tells people he talks to, there is a time and place for everything but the street is not the place to race. Darin attends local charity events, car shows and visits all the local high schools to promote the safety of driving safe and responsibly.

On any given day, you can usually find Darin somewhere between the city of Newberry and Tower Road on State Road 26 (Newberry Road) monitoring the traffic flow and reminding people to wear their seat belts. You may also see Darin at the local high schools two to three times a year talking to all the driver's education classes, as well as other classes on traffic safety. It is a great joy for Darin to talk to the area's youth about driving safe and responsible. He feels that he helps them understand there are consequences for every action on the road as a driver and passenger in a motor vehicle.

Darin is a wonderful advocate of safety and education as it deals with traffic on our roadways. I could write on many of the other great aspects that Darin brings to the community and the agency. Darin is one person that truly makes a difference on a daily basis!



Sgt. Jayson Levy  
Alachua County Sheriff's Office

