

SMART MOVES

FDOT District Four ITS Quarterly Newsletter

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New Tool for TIM Team Members

Florida Division of Forestry officials discussed the increased risk of wildfires due to South Florida's worsening drought at the first Traffic Incident Management (TIM) meetings of 2011 in Palm Beach and the Treasure Coast.

Forest area supervisor Dale Armstrong and wildfire mitigation specialist Melissa Yunas briefed the Treasure Coast TIM Team on Jan. 20, while wildfire mitigation specialist Scott Peterich gave an update to the Palm Beach TIM Team on Feb. 1.

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Severe Incident Response Vehicle at brush fire on April 19, 2007.

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The Division of Forestry has a number of resources about wildfires on its website – www.fl-dof.com – for law enforcement and other TIM partner agencies. The information can be found under the Hot Topics tab.

The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) map can be found on the webpage. The Division of Forestry has used the Keetch-Byram Drought Index since 1998 to determine the potential for wildfire. The KBDI is a continuous reference scale for estimating the dryness of the soil and duff layers. The KBDI uses a scale ranging from 0 (no moisture deficit) to 800 (extremely dry conditions) that increases or decreases depending on rainfall. High values of the KBDI can indicate that conditions are favorable for wildfires. But other weather factors, such as wind, temperature and relative humidity, also need to be considered in determining the actual fire danger. The KBDI is updated daily.

A new resource, which is a better and more accurate predictor of wildfires than the Keetch-Byram Drought Index, is the Fire Danger Index (FDI). The FDI map combines two components - the forecast/actual Energy Release Component and the forecast/actual relative humidity - to estimate the potential for a fire to start and require suppression action on any given day. The FDI also is a continuous reference scale with five categories: Low, Moderate, High, Very High and Extreme. Like the KBDI, the FDI is updated daily, based on observations taken at 1300 hours (1:00 p.m.).

Other information on the website includes:

- A listing of all current county burn bans.
- A map showing the location of current wildfires.
- Road closures throughout Florida due to heavy smoke.
- Wildfire statistics, including year-to-date totals on the number of wildfires and acres burned.

Scott Peterich said the period from mid-September through December was unusually dry. Freezing temperatures during December were followed by a 10-day period when 22 wildfires were reported.

Increased wildfire activity can be expected if below normal rainfall continues through the start of the wet season.

At the Treasure Coast meeting, Dale Armstrong and Melissa Yunas talked about the wildfires on Jan. 15 that closed southbound Interstate 95 in St. Lucie County for nearly nine hours. The first fire broke out in the median and burned about 10 acres. A second fire burned about 30 acres in a wooded area west of the highway. Traffic was routed off the highway at Gatlin Road and directed west to a newly-completed section of Southwest Village Parkway and south to Becker Road to re-enter I-95. Warnings about the shutdown were posted on Dynamic Message Signs along I-95 north into Brevard County and along Florida's Turnpike. Information also was available on Florida 511.

Forestry officials said the initial fire near Mile Marker 116 was probably caused by a vehicle that stopped along the median. Heat from a vehicle's catalytic converter can start a fire if the vehicle is parked on grass high enough to brush the exhaust system. Because of drought conditions in the area, law enforcement officers and others working on I-95 should be careful and try to avoid areas with patches of tall, dry grass when pulling off the highway. If you do stop on the shoulder or median, make sure you check under your vehicle for any sign of a fire.



The 2010 SMART SunGuide Awards

The SMART SunGuide Awards recognize the commitment and service to those individuals who performed above and beyond the call of duty. Awards are given to employees of the SMART SunGuide Regional Transportation Management Center (RTMC) and the partnering agencies. The awards ceremony, sponsored by AECOM, was held on February 17, 2011.

Following is a list of individuals that were recognized for their outstanding service during 2010:

- Road Ranger: Newcomer of the year – Adrian Ortiz, Anchor Towing
- Road Ranger: Continued Excellence – Armando Garcia, Sunshine Towing
- Road Ranger: Dedication to Motorist Assistance – Juslet Beullot, Sunshine Towing
- Traffic Incident Management: Participation and Contribution in meetings – Assistant Fire Chief Carlos Duran, Port St. Lucie Fire District
- ITS Operations: Customer Service and Mentoring – Kifara Haul, AECOM
- ITS Management: Innovation and Leadership – Kenneth Young, AECOM
- ITS Maintenance: Dedication to System Availability – Marcello Campo, Transcore
- Road Watcher: Dedication to Motorist Safety – Patrick Freiwald, FDOT
- Public Partnering: Commitment to Teamwork – Florida Highway Patrol, Troop L Davie

Additionally, as part of the awards ceremony, Sergeant Mark Wysocky, Public Affairs Officer from FHP Troop “L,” was presented with over 300 stuffed animals to use for their Care Bears program. FHP Troopers keep these stuffed animals in their patrol cars, ready to give them to children who may be involved in a

traumatizing traffic event. On February 10, 2010, Sergeant Wysocky paid it forward, donating the bears too large to fit in patrol car trunks to the Joe DiMaggio Children’s Hospital.

The SMART SunGuide RTMC coordinated an internal campaign to collect the bears, quickly catching on with partnering agencies. Donations came from FDOT District Four Office, Broward County Traffic Engineering Division, AECOM Sunrise Office and Transcore. This year’s collection celebrates its 5th year.



The 2010 Annual Report is now available online.

Visit www.SMARTSunGuide.com today to get your copy.



2nd Annual Road Ranger Survey

The 2nd annual “Road Ranger Survey for Incident Responders” is being conducted through March 31, 2011.

This year, incident responders have two ways to participate in the survey – a hard copy which was distributed at Traffic Incident Management (TIM) meetings and a web-based tool. The link to the web survey is:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/roadrangersurveyincidentresponders>

The idea for the Road Ranger survey was conceived by the District Four TIM Management Team and adopted by FDOT Central Office. The goal is to determine incident responders’ opinion of the program and identify areas for future improvements and enhancements.

Last year, nearly 800 responses were received (211 from District Four TIM Teams) from around the state. With the web survey and the expansion of Road Ranger service to the Treasure Coast area last September, more participation is expected this year. After the online survey was distributed on Feb. 2, approximately 225 responses were received within the first two days.

Among the survey questions, incident responders are asked to comment on whether the Road Rangers improved on-scene safety, were helpful in resolving incidents and were thoroughly trained for their job. Responders also were asked if response times are acceptable, if the vehicles are adequately equipped and to rate their level of satisfaction with the Road Ranger service patrol operators.

Based on last year’s results, several recommendations were made to improve the District Four Road Ranger program, including:

- Need for more interoperable communications.
- Improve communication of arrival times to responders requesting assistance.
- Educate responders on Road Ranger responsibilities and capabilities.
- Identify level of additional incident clearance training needed.
- Review requirements for Road Ranger vehicle types and equipment.

This year’s survey is similar to last year’s with the addition of one question. Respondents were asked to identify the county/city/roadway where they worked with the Road Rangers.



Incident responders are encouraged to participate in this year’s Road Ranger Survey.

Enhanced Location Reference Markers: Pinpoint Locations for Incidents

Reduce clearance times of incidents. Reduce secondary crashes. Reduce response time and reduce the number of responders sent to incidents and improve their safety. These are performance outcomes that District Four wants to achieve. As a means to do this, District Four is scheduled to deploy Enhanced Location Reference Markers along I-75 and I-95. The markers are planned to be installed every 2/10ths of a mile. The project is currently in design phase and outreach to 911 centers is slated to educate call takers during emergencies.

Past research by the Federal Highway Administration shows that faster and more accurate identification of incident locations reduces the total length of incident duration thus reducing the likelihood of secondary crashes. The Federal Highway Administration reports that approximately 20 percent of all incidents are secondary in nature. Enhanced Location Reference

Markers will provide motorists, and in-turn first responders, detailed information not currently available to allow 911 dispatchers and RTMC operators to pinpoint incidents and reduce response time to incidents. Removing incidents more quickly from travel lanes and shoulders will return traffic back to normal flow faster thus reducing any possible secondary crashes. Secondary incidents in high-speed traffic can be severe, even fatal, especially when they occur at the boundary between free-flowing, highway speed and stopped traffic such as occurs at the end of the traffic queue.

Enhanced Location Reference Markers are currently in the Miami, Orlando, and Tampa areas of Florida; Indiana; Kentucky; Maryland; Missouri; New Jersey; New York; Ohio; Pennsylvania; Tennessee; Washington; and Wisconsin. This project is scheduled for funding in the 2011-2012 fiscal year and signs installed in 2012.



Treasure Coast TIM Team News

The Martin County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) hosted the Treasure Coast Traffic Incident Management Team for its first meeting of 2011. The EOC is located at the Martin County Public Safety Complex, along with the Martin County Sheriff's Office and Martin County Fire Rescue. Keith Holman, the county's Emergency Management Agency Director, led the team on a tour of the facility, including the control room, media interview

room and the 911 communications center. Fire rescue dispatchers remarked how the ITS devices along Interstate 95 should improve the detection and verification of highway incidents and result in a more coordinated response. The EOC encompasses about 13,000 square feet in the 70,000-square foot public safety complex. It's about three times larger than the cramped facility where emergency managers worked during the hurricanes of 2004 and

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“3-D Wall” of Traffic Images Available to Public

An infinite “3-D wall” of images from live traffic cameras is now available on www.SMARTSunGuide.com. This easy to navigate virtual wall allows users to browse over 120 camera images that can be sorted by county and roadway directly on a desktop and without having to click page by page. The virtual wall includes images from cameras on I-75, I-595, and I-95 in Broward and Palm Beach counties.

With just a click, every camera in the district can be viewed online. The images are current but must be manually refreshed. This can be a great tool for finding traffic conditions in Broward and Palm Beach counties. Later this year, nearly 70 additional cameras from the Treasure Coast will be added.



Cooliris software allows SMARTSunGuide.com visitors to see all District Four’s CCTV camera images with a single click.

Building on the existing SMARTSunGuide.com travel times feature, motorists can now calculate drive time to Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, Port Everglades and Palm Beach International Airport. For frequent users, this feature can be saved for frequent checking and tied into SMART Alerts. The times are based on historical data collected over the last year and are meant as approximate times only. The times are only for highway travel and to the entrance of the airport, not travel beyond the closest off ramp.

The traffic camera image wall is located under Traffic Information (upper left side). The airport and seaport calculator is located on the homepage’s panel of features (lower left side).

(Treasure Coast TIM Team News continued from page 5)

2005. The EOC, with its impact resistant windows and mechanically-operated shutters, has been hardened to withstand winds up to 190 mph.

During the meeting, Kathryn Boer, emergency programs coordinator for the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, made a presentation on the newly-completed Statewide Regional Evacuation Study, focusing on the information that pertains to the Treasure Coast region. The study was a joint project of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the Department of Community Affairs/Division of Community Planning and the Florida Department of Transportation in coordination with the 11 Regional Planning Councils around the state. It took more than three years of research to compile the data. The intent is to have agencies, cities and counties review different storm scenarios and prepare for the appropriate response. An Emergency Management Tool Kit is included with the study.

