



Why We Need Road Rangers!

Florida's Road Rangers are traffic incident responders that have a positive and extremely cost-effective impact on highway safety and congestion mitigation on our state's busiest highways

The Florida Road Ranger Program's primary objective is to provide prompt traffic incident management to improve safety, reduce delay, and avoid secondary crashes. Highways are built to move our citizens, visitors, and commercial traffic and it is critical to keep these vital economic arteries open and functioning efficiently. In short, it's not sufficient to have "capacity," we must also operate the system effectively. Nationally 60% of traffic delay is caused by things we can mitigate through better traffic operations, including 25% caused entirely by incidents. As many as 30% of all incidents are secondary crashes, stalls, etc., resulting from earlier incidents.

FHWA Report, "Traffic Congestion and Reliability: Linking Solutions to Problems" July 2004



Transportation System Management and Operations (TSM&O) is a vital element of optimizing the effectiveness of our highway system. Programs such as intelligent transportation systems (ITS) help manage traffic, inform motorists of travel problems, and detect and verify incidents, but only incident responders can clear the roadway quickly, and law enforcement simply does not have the resources to respond quickly to unexpected incidents. **In most locations, Road Rangers are the first to respond and immediately begin managing the scene until law enforcement arrives.**

Road Rangers identify abandoned vehicles; are assigned to highways that are major supply chain routes for special events and disaster relief; help manage evacuations; and supply an important security function since they are the most consistent responders.

It is impossible to assess how many lives, hours, and dollars have been saved by crashes and other incidents that did not happen, however some measurable benefits of the Road Ranger program are as follows:

- Increased safety at incident scenes—every extra minute increases the likelihood of a secondary crash by 2.8%.
- Reduction of secondary crashes—which constitute approximately 30% of all crashes.
- Reduction in congestion through quick clearance—a single blocked lane reduces roadway capacity by 50% and even a shoulder-based incident reduces capacity by at least 15%.

- Reduction of incident duration by assisting the Florida Highway Patrol—statewide average incident durations are down to about 45 min from 60 min., thus saving many thousands of dollars in delay time.
- Removal of road debris hazards—these cause secondary incidents, too.
- Reduction of congestion-produced air pollutants—tons of emissions are avoided by quick clearance.
- Assistance to disabled or stranded motorists—since the program’s inception in the year 2000, the Road Rangers have made over 2.2 million motorist assists with more occurring daily.

The Road Ranger Program is funded through the Florida DOT and toll authorities as a positive and cost-effective means to address highway safety and congestion mitigation. The 25.8:1 benefit-to-cost ratio (see attached Fact Sheet) says that the citizens of Florida will receive 516 million dollars in economic savings for a 20 million dollar investment.

Many mistakenly compare the Road Ranger Program to that of motor clubs such as AAA. Motor clubs provide insurance services and assist the traveling public with travel and tourism services. Motor clubs are for-profit entities that were founded to collect insurance premiums and provide a network of tow trucks. They are “on-call” member-only services and disabled motorists still constitute a hazard for many minutes before help arrives.

The Road Ranger Program, on the other hand, is in place to respond to highway incidents of all types, setup temporary maintenance of traffic, protect other first responders and the public, clear the roadway of debris, and get stranded motorists off the side of the highway. All of this reduces distractions and possible secondary crashes. When the Road Rangers are not performing these tasks, they provide assistance to the public, but Road Rangers do not tow vehicles to places of repair; they only relocate vehicles short distances off the highway when needed.

It is important to note that a fully funded Road Ranger Program is dramatically less expensive than building additional lanes to increase capacity. The cost to construct two new lanes for two miles is approximately \$45 million and provides additional capacity only in that localized area. That same funding for the Road Rangers would benefit the entire intrastate highway system in Florida.

In conclusion, the primary function of the Road Ranger Patrol is to respond to any incident that impacts traffic on our intrastate system; provide safety alerts to oncoming traffic; provide temporary maintenance of traffic to the incident scene; and clear the road of incidents. While Road Ranger Patrols do help distressed motorists on the intrastate system, it is because this situation is a traffic hazard that could impact safety, cause on-looker delay, and motorist distraction—which often leads to secondary incidents. **The Road Ranger Incident Response Program fully supports the strategic mission of the Florida Department of Transportation and sound traffic incident management principles.**

About ITS Florida: ITS Florida is a state chapter of ITS America, an organization that provides technical advice and assistance to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). ITS America and its state chapters use technology to significantly improve the performance of our transportation system. ITS Florida members include transportation agencies, private and commercial transportation system users, ITS technology and service providers, and other agencies supporting the transportation system in Florida. To learn more about ITS Florida, visit www.itsflorida.org.



Road Ranger Facts



- Road Rangers are roving vehicles that provide incident management in heavily congested travel corridors, high-incident locations, and construction work zones.
- First begun in 2000, the purpose of the Road Ranger program is to provide quick response in support of emergency first responder personnel during incidents, “protecting” the back of queues from incident locations, removing debris, assisting disabled/stranded motorists, and providing support during hurricane evacuations. Their main role is to help clear the roadway as quickly as possible, and prevent secondary incidents.
- Road Rangers are equipped to assist in lane clearance and traffic control during incidents while also providing limited amounts of fuel, tire changing assistance, cell phone calls for car service, and other types of minor emergency repairs to disabled vehicles—again to get them moving, not distracting other drivers and reducing secondary incidents.
- In November 2005, an independent research study was commissioned on the benefits of the Road Ranger Program. The overall statewide benefit/cost ratio was found to be 25.8:1. Benefits come from more rapid response and quicker clearance, resulting in reduced overall delay to travelers and likelihood of secondary crashes.
- SunGuide[®] traffic management center software data in six of the eight districts confirms benefit/cost ratio is at least 25.8:1. This software package is used daily to record incident information for the Florida DOT.
- Since inception, the Road Rangers have made over 2.2 million assists statewide with more occurring each day.
- According to most recent statewide customer satisfaction survey on operational awareness and services, 76% of motorists indicated Road Ranger assistance to be “very useful.”
- Hundreds of thankful motorists have written to the Florida DOT and FHP to express their gratitude for the assistance provided to them by Road Rangers.
- During 2008, reduced program funding from the state’s budget necessitated FDOT Road Ranger contractors to seek supplemental funding through sponsorships and advertising revenues in an effort to maintain current operational levels. Oversight of potential sponsorship contracts (several are currently in negotiation) is being provided by FDOT Central Office and related district offices.

(Information sources: Florida Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation)