

# 3rd Senior Executive Transportation & Public Safety Summit

**Remarks Prepared for Delivery by  
U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao  
3rd Senior Executive Transportation & Public Safety Summit  
Washington, DC  
Thursday, November 14, 2019**

Thank you, Nicole. I'd also like to acknowledge James Owens, NHTSA Acting Administrator, and Jim Mullen, FMCSA Acting Administrator, who are also participating in this Summit.

I would like to recognize and commend the member organizations of the Traffic Incident Management Executive Leadership Group:

- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
- National Sheriffs Association (NSA)
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
- National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)
- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
- Towing and Recovery Association of America (TRAA)
- National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO)
- National EMS Management Association (NEMSMA)
- American Public Works Association (APWA)
- Int'l Municipal Signal Association (IMSA)

Thank you so very much for your commitment and contributions to improving safety for responders. Thank you to everyone who is involved in this effort to save lives and reduce injuries on America's roads.

Since January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, 39 responders have been killed while doing their jobs responding to incidents on America's roads. This tragic tally includes: 15 law enforcement officers, 13 towing and recovery personnel, 8 firefighters and EMS personnel and 3 mobile mechanics. Others have been seriously injured, some in life-altering ways.

Just a couple of days before I addressed the Lifesavers National Conference in March, the 21<sup>st</sup> responder fatality of 2019 occurred: 34-year old Illinois State Trooper Brooke Jones-Story. She was conducting an inspection on a tractor-trailer when she was struck by another semi-truck. A couple of days later, Illinois State Trooper Gerald Ellis was killed by a driver travelling the wrong-way on I-94.

These awful, needless tragedies have got to stop. And they can be stopped. NHTSA and FHWA are committed to working together with our law enforcement, fire and EMS, towing, transportation and public works partners and State highway safety offices, to increase awareness of "Move Over" laws. And to highlight the need to protect responders who place themselves at risk to protect and assist motorists.

Efforts to enforce and educate about "move over" laws must be intensified. Although all 50 States now have "Move Over" laws to protect law enforcement officers and other first responders, 71% of Americans are not yet aware of these laws. Increasing public awareness of Move Over laws would make a tremendous difference! Moving over for responders must become a new habit ingrained in the minds of motorists.

In the U.S., on average, three injury crashes occur every minute, putting nearly 39,000 incident responders potentially in harm's way, every day. Addressing the dangers to crash responders is one of the reasons the Department developed the National Traffic Incident Management Responder Training program. Over 440,000 responders have so far received the training. Federal Highways' goal is to train well over a million responders.

The collection of data through crash reports is vital to improving traffic safety. The collection of secondary crashes is now recommended in the Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria. Although secondary crashes are often more severe than the original crash, there is not yet sufficient understanding of the phenomenon. Increasing the collection of secondary crash data will also help in addressing the tragedy of responders being killed or injured in the line of duty.

The Department's Safety Data Initiative was launched to integrate data sources with each other and with new 'big data' sources that are becoming available. The current tools around safety data were created in the 20th century. So we worked with Congress to secure funding for this new safety data initiative. It builds on the Department's capacity to utilize predictive data analytics to identify and mitigate the systemic factors contributing to serious crashes.

Research is also ongoing to better understand the relationship between roadway design, traffic volumes, speed and crash occurrences and outcomes.

As Secretary of Transportation, safety is my top priority. And I appreciate, very much, that safety is your top priority, too. Thank you for what you do to protect responders and make America's roads safer, for everyone.

Thank you.