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Major Construction Incidents

2-301  General

This section provides guidelines for reporting and dealing with accidents and major incidents on construction projects. For more detailed guidelines on reporting, refer to Chapter 19, “Special Reporting of Serious Injury, Illness, or Fatality,” of the Caltrans Safety and Health Manual. The chapter also discusses special reporting for a serious occupational injury, illness, or fatality connected with employment activity.

2-302  Reportable Accidents and Incidents

Below are descriptions of accidents and construction incidents to report.

2-302A  Accidents

Report accidents that:

- Have resulted in serious injury to or death of a contractor’s employee.
- Have involved serious injury to or death of a state or a consultant employee.
- Have involved serious damage to equipment owned by the state, a consultant, or the contractor.
- Have resulted in the serious injury to or death of a member of the public in the construction zone or were influenced in any way by construction-related activities, conditions, equipment, or personnel.
- Were catastrophic or have received wide media coverage.
- Have involved vehicles entering the active work zone.
- Have involved vertical or horizontal clearance issues.
- Had no injuries, but had a high potential for being fatal or disabling, such as falsework or guyed system failures, overturned cranes, high-voltage power line contacts, trench excavation or shoring failures, gas or fuel line fires or explosions, hazardous utility breaks, and collisions with structures under construction or their supporting falsework that caused displacement of a major member.

2-302B  Unusual or Extraordinary Construction Occurrences

Unusual or extraordinary construction occurrences are reportable incidents that may not be classified as accidents, such as these:

- Disasters that result in major damage to a state facility or project work.
- Situations that result in the evacuation of the project, the immediate area, or both.
- Any other events that affect the state facility or project work and may generate media coverage.
- Encounters of previously unknown hazardous material on a construction project.
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- A hazardous spill on a roadway within construction project limits.
- An incident causing major traffic delays.

2-302C Notification of Emergency Highway Closure

Immediately report to the district dispatch center or the transportation management center (TMC) any situation that requires emergency closures of traffic lanes or the highway. For information on reporting closures, refer to Section 4-1203C, “Maintaining Traffic,” of this manual. Provide timely and accurate information to allow the TMC to notify the California Highway Patrol, the media, and the public of possible delays.

2-303 Reporting Procedures

Immediately report all reportable accidents and major incidents to the district TMC, the district dispatch center, or—when TMC or the center is closed—the Caltrans Highway Information Center. Use Form CEM-0603, “Major Construction Incident Notification.”

Immediately report all fatalities or major injuries of Caltrans personnel, Caltrans consultants, or contractor personnel to the Chief Engineer and to Headquarters Division of Construction Chief.

Email an initial report to Major.Incident.Reports@dot.ca.gov. The Office of Health and Safety in the Division of Safety and Management Services and the Division of Construction monitor this email address. Also send copies of the report to the district construction safety coordinator and district management.

If email is unavailable, fax the form to the numbers at the top of the form, the district construction safety coordinator, and district management.

When necessary, Form CEM-0603 may also be used to email or fax an updated report providing supplementary information to the initial report.

2-304 Guidelines

When responding to major incidents in construction zones, do the following:

- Take appropriate action without jeopardizing public or employee safety.
- Document all incident details, paying special attention to traffic controls and the contractor’s activity at the time of the incident. Take pictures of the job site along the incident location and file them with the incident details in Category 6, “Safety,” of the project file.
- Provide timely and accurate information to management to document the extent of the incident and to identify major issues and current actions.
- In the event of a closure or restriction, restore the transportation facility to full operation as quickly as possible.
- Mitigate the effect on the public or the project caused by unusual or extraordinary occurrences.

The district construction deputy director activates a construction incident response team when warranted by the sensitivity and severity of a major incident. The team’s principal purpose is to provide incident information to Caltrans managers and the media. The team enables the resident engineer to focus on restoring the transportation system, the project, or both. The team may also advise the resident engineer on technical matters. The construction engineer heads the team, which may also include:
• A representative of the district public relations staff.
• Technical personnel from other Caltrans functional areas such as safety, traffic, structures, design, or environmental.

Report hazardous material encounters and hazardous spills as outlined in 2-303, “Reporting Procedures,” earlier in this section. For more information on procedures to follow in the event of hazardous material encounters or hazardous spills, see Figure 7-1.1, “Unknown Hazards Procedure,” in Chapter 7, “Environmental Stewardship,” of this manual.

As described in Section 2-214D, “Construction Contingency Plan,” of this manual, the contractor must have a contingency plan for reopening closed traffic lanes.