



For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, February 7, 2017

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GEORGIA DOT ANNOUNCES NATION'S FIRST STATEWIDE FREEWAY PATROL SERVICE WITH LAUNCH OF "CHAMP" *Coordinated Highway Assistance & Maintenance Program (CHAMP)*

ATLANTA— Starting today, motorists in Georgia will begin to experience the benefits of a new statewide program that enhances highway safety and provides them with roadside assistance when they need it. The Georgia Department of Transportation's new Coordinated Highway Assistance & Maintenance Program (CHAMP) begins its phased launch today in Northeast Georgia with plans to roll out the service to five other districts in the state by this May.

CHAMP serves most interstates across Georgia located outside of Metro Atlanta. While CHAMP is distinct and separate from the Department's long-standing and highly successful Highway Emergency Response Operators (HERO) program in the Atlanta region, its addition to Georgia DOT's safety program makes Georgia the first state to provide statewide interstate highway assistance.

"Ensuring the safety of our roadways for motorists and first responders is our primary goal. With that in mind, we are excited to launch CHAMP in order to expand our patrol and assistance services across the state," said Georgia DOT Commissioner Russell R. McMurry, P.E. "This is a complimentary public service made possible by Georgia's Transportation Funding Act of 2015. CHAMP would not be feasible without those funds."

CHAMPs report or resolve roadway maintenance issues and assist law enforcement with traffic incidents to ensure safe, quick clearance and efficient traffic flow. They provide immediate notification about bridge or roadway damage, downed signs, missing markings, signal malfunctions, and commercial vehicle crashes and spills. They also clear clogged drains, clean up minor non-hazardous spills, and remove debris, vegetative growth and abandoned vehicles. CHAMPs also aid motorists who need help.

"What makes CHAMP different from HERO and other similar patrols across the country is that it specifically addresses highway maintenance," State Traffic Engineer Andrew Heath, P.E. said. "CHAMP operators are Georgia DOT's eyes on the road. By proactively responding to maintenance issues, as well as addressing incident clearance and motorist assistance, they will make Georgia highways safer."

Georgia DOT is implementing CHAMP in two-week intervals across the state through May. After today's launch, the second of six rollouts is scheduled for Feb. 21 in East Central Georgia. When fully operational, CHAMP will be staffed by 48 full-time operators and 18 full-time dispatchers. A total of 51 branded, custom-fitted CHAMP trucks will patrol 16 different routes on interstates (except short stretches of I-24 and I-59) seven days a week, 16 hours a day, and will be on call the other eight hours. Operators do not accept tips or payment from the public.

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The CHAMP procurement process was completed through a competitive solicitation request for proposals. The contract was awarded to AECOM team; KCI and Kennedy Engineering (DBE) subcontractors, who provide management, dispatch, operator staff and the truck fleet to carry out all duties. The three-year contract includes an option to extend for an additional two years.

CHAMP is a statewide complement to Georgia DOT's HERO incident management program in Metro Atlanta, which has served motorists for more than 20 years. HERO's primary duty is to clear roads at traffic-related incidents so that normal traffic flow is restored; they also assist stranded motorists. HERO patrols 310 miles of Metro Atlanta freeways on 31 routes every day during peak hours and responds to incidents 24/7. Georgia DOT's Highway Emergency Response Operators program is sponsored by State Farm.

For motorist assistance or to report a crash, infrastructure damage or debris on a Georgia interstate or state route, motorists are directed to dial 511. Callers will be asked to provide operators with their location, milepost or nearest exit number to assist CHAMPs in locating the incident. For information about CHAMP, including a route map and statewide implementation schedule, visit www.dot.ga.gov/CHAMP.

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