

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

OPERATIONS DIVISION

INSTRUCTIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

GENERAL SUBJECT: After Action Reviews & Reports	NUMBER: IIM-OD-15-04.1
SPECIFIC SUBJECT: Standardized procedure for conducting, and documenting After Action Reviews & Reports	DATE: 04/01/2021
	EXPIRES: 04/01/2026
	SUPERSEDES: IIM-OD-15-04
APPROVED with Signature of file in the office of the Operations Division: _____ Ali Farhangi, P.E. State Operations Engineer Approved April 5 th , 2021	

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this IIM is to standardize operating procedure for documenting, and conducting After Action Reviews (AAR) and reports.

BACKGROUND:

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) provides an After Action Review process for its state forces, and some of contract forces involved in responding to crashes, and quick clearance of incidents that occur on VDOT's road system. In addition, the process is designed for public safety agencies, and for VDOT to come together to identify root causes, and develop a plan of action for corrective measures, if required after an incident.

Section I – After Action Review Introduction

As stated in the purpose, this IIM was developed to establish standardized procedures for the administration of After Action Reviews for traffic operations, safety service patrol, and incident management in Virginia. The ongoing process of incident evaluation allows responders to assess current program performance, identify future training needs, and make procedure recommendations. After Action Reviews of major incidents, provide

opportunities to review the effectiveness of on-scene actions, and review procedures after field execution. In addition, it is an opportunity to review overall quality of services being provided to the Commonwealth, and its public safety responders. These type of reviews are valuable in improving responses to crashes, quick clearance of incidents, and keeping Virginia moving.

The IIM shall serve as a reference document, and a foundation that shall be supplemented by in-person instruction. The IIM is organized as follows:

Section II – Criteria

Section III – Process

Section IV – Meeting Format

Section V – After Action Review Report

Section VI – Facilitator’s Guide

Section VII – Roles and Responsibilities of Key Positions

Appendix A – Incident Commander Input Form

Appendix B – Support Agency Input Form

Appendix C – After Action Report

Section II. Criteria

II.1 – After Action Review Criteria

An After Action review should be evaluated, and conducted if any of the following criteria’s are met:

- Total road closure of one or more directions on interstate and Limited Access/High Volume Primary routes over 5 hours.
- High Profile motor vehicle crashes that involve mass casualties, infrastructure damage, multi-agency response and chemical biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive weapons incidents.
- Significant weather related incident or event.
- Any major work zone, special event or other event that significantly affects traffic flow.
- Complex incident resulting from a failure to follow incident command system (ICS).
- Upon request of Public Safety Responders on-scene or agency representing Public Safety Responders on-scene.

- Upon request of the VDOT Field Commander, Residency, Region or District leadership.

Section III. Process

III. 1 – AAR Process

The Incident Commander and/or VDOT designated personnel shall have shared responsibility for the overall effectiveness of this procedure. Both the After Actions Review and After Action Review Report is a valuable tool to improve the overall VDOT Operations and Emergency Response Initiative. The After Action Review is intended to identify “**root causes**” and develop a plan of action for corrective measures, if required after an event. The Regional Incident Management Coordinator, Regional Traffic Operations Manager, District Duty Officer or if an appropriate outside facilitator is selected may initiate the After Action Review.

III. 2 – Initiating AAR

Once it has been determined that an After Action Review will take place, the person who is initiating the review shall contact the Statewide Incident Management Program office to make them aware of the time and date of the After Action Review so they may attend and/or track the After Action Review report for documentation purposes.

III. 3 – Initiators Responsibility

The initiator of the After Action Review is responsible for:

- Inviting First Responder and/or Secondary Response agencies, if deemed appropriate.
- Setting the meeting date, time and location.
- Disseminating the necessary materials, such as, “Incident Information Sheet”.
- Gathering all materials from both the internal and/or external stakeholders involved in the incident.
- Writing the After Action Review Report
- Submitting the approved After Action Review Report to the Statewide Incident Management Program office.

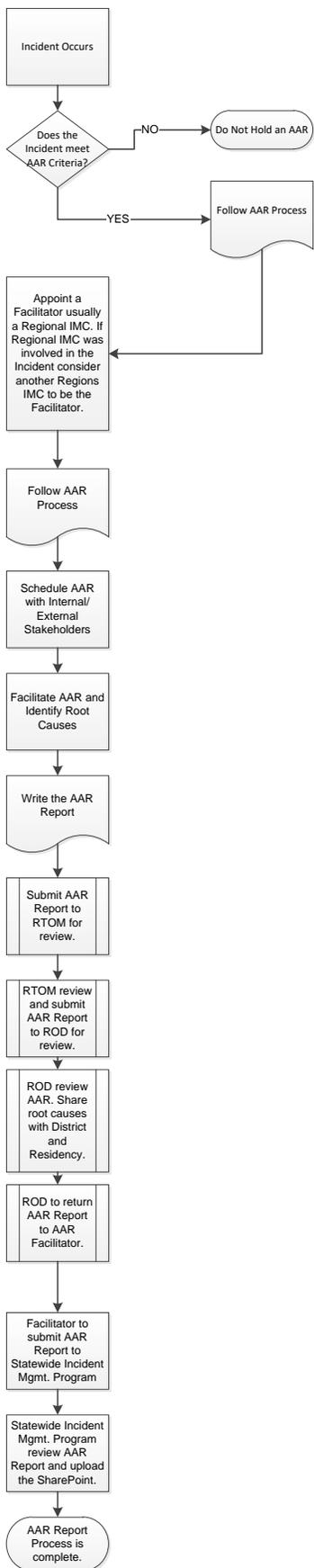
III.4 – AAR Review

The After Action Review shall be completed within 15 business days of the incident. It is important to complete AAR’s quickly after an incident or event, while details are fresh in everyone’s mind.

III. 5 – Report Processing

Once the After Action Review Report has been reviewed, and with signatures. The signed report shall be forwarded to Operations Division - Incident Management Program. The Operations Division - Incident Management Program will periodically review, and revise incident management procedures, processes, and training to ensure best practices are being used consistently across VDOT. Final AAR's will be posted at: ["Statewide Incident Management Collaboration Site"](#) under folder marked "After Action Reviews".

AAR Incident Process



Section IV. Meeting Format

IV.1 – After Action Review Meeting Format

Review the incident activities in chronological order of events. Use the “Incident Information Sheet” as guide while conducting the After Action Review meeting.

After Action Review Participants should come prepared to:

- If applicable, bring their filled out copy of the “Incident Information Sheet: and /or any additional reports, timelines that can help jog memory.
- If applicable, bring their filled out copy of the “Incident Information Sheet” and disseminate completed copies to VDOT however this is “***Voluntary***”.
- Actively participate in the discussion in a professional manner.
- Bring an open mind, be-candid and open to suggestions.

Several memory jogger forms can be utilized before the After Action Review meeting is started and after:

- Appendix A - Incident Commander Input Form
- Appendix B - Supporting Agency Input Form
- Appendix C - AARR-After Action Review Report

The facilitator has the critical role during the analysis session. (See Facilitator’s Guide Section 5.0)

Section V. After Action Review Report

V.1 - After Action Review Report

This formal report is to address the findings of the After Action Review, the problems encountered, lessons learned, and set forth recommendations for improvement in future operations. The format shall be chronological order as events of the incident occurred.

Format for the After Action Review Report:

Brief Incident Description (*Who, What, When, Where, Why and How*).

- Provide a brief description of the incident, for example: highlighting/identifying the initial scene assessment, Incident Command System, Overall Incident Commander, VDOT Field Commander and their role in the overall Incident Command System. The overall Incident Action Plan, VDOT resources and resources used, other agencies involved, and actions taken. This section may include timelines as provided by the Regional Traffic Operation center and/or other First Responder sources.

Lessons Learned

- Identify specific areas for improvement and the “root cause (s)” for each.

Action Items

- Identify recommendations to address each lesson-learned, describe corrective actions, identify responsible agency, person assigned to task and assign target completion date if applicable.

After Action Review Meeting Summary

- This section is to include the date, time, and location of the After Action Review, the response agencies in attendance, the response agencies that did not attend, and a brief summary of the review meeting.

Photos and/or diagrams

- Please include any photos or diagrams as appropriate to illustrate incident and activities. **Graphic patient photos and non-HIPPA compliant identifiers should not be used.**

The facilitator is responsible for filling out the After Action Review Report.

The After Action Review Report is sent to:

- An approved PDF copy of the report shall be sent via email to the Statewide Incident Management Program Office. Statewide Incident Management Program Office will maintain and upload the reports onto the [“Statewide Incident Management Collaboration Site”](#) under folder marked “After Action Reviews”.

Section VI. Facilitator’s Guide

VI.1 – Facilitator’s Guide

The After Action Review is not intended as a forum for personal, and agency criticism. It is an opportunity for critical thinking and problem solving. When conducted properly, it is a valuable discussion of the events of an incident that can be used to enhance the operations of all those involved with future opportunities.

Remind all participants of the purpose of the After Action Review and encourage them all to:

- Be candid, honest, and clear about the information being presented
- Have open minds to allow everyone to participate.
- Accept suggestions for improved operations.
- Avoid blaming, being negative or accusing in your review.
- Offer ideas and helpful suggestions.
- Ensure efficient use of time and relevancy to incident.

The facilitator should guide the discussion and have participant’s present incident activities in chronological order based on when they arrived on the scene. Each participant should discuss his or her agencies involvement prior to the open discussion portion of the review.

The facilitator should utilize the “Incident Information Sheet” for ensuring all critical operations and factors have been reviewed.

The facilitator should challenge the participants to ensure that effective decisions and operations are discussed and reinforced.

The facilitator should review and discuss objectively, the decisions and operations that should be improved. Emphasize the training opportunities, not as mistakes or disciplinary issues. Ask questions.

Allow participants to be candid; however do not allow the discussion to turn into a judgmental or chastising situation. Encourage a positive review, keeping in mind that the goal is to seek improvement.

The facilitator shall end the discussion by summarizing the incident, the lessons learned; the operations that worked well; the action items identified to address lessons learned; and the person and or persons assigned to the task (s).

Section VII. Roles and Responsibilities of Key Positions

VII.1 – Roles and Responsibilities

VDOT Field Commander - To become familiar with IIM and its process. To provide all information to the Regional Incident Management Coordinator when requested in regards to scene management. To participate in After Action Review when requested.

Incident Management Coordinators - To lead, coordinate and facilitate all After Action Reviews in assigned Region and complete After Action Review Reports unless directed otherwise. Lessons learned that are life safety issues should be corrected in an expeditious manner and Regional Incident Management Coordinator should notify appropriate personnel and coordinate. Submit report to Regional Traffic Operations Manager for review. After Regional Operations Director approval the Regional Incident Management Coordinator shall submit the final approved After Action Review Report to the Statewide Incident Management Program office within (3) business days.

Regional Traffic Operations Managers - Attend the After Action Reviews with Regional Incident Management Coordinator, if deemed appropriate. Review the After Action Review Report prepared by Regional Incident Management Coordinator. Lessons learned that are life safety issues should be corrected in an expeditious manner and Regional Traffic Operations Manager should request that the Regional Incident Management Coordinator notify appropriate personnel and assist in coordination. After reviewing the report, the Regional Traffic Operations Manager will forward the report to Regional Operations Director.

Regional Operations Directors - Review the After Action Review Reports. Lessons learned that are life safety issues should be corrected in an expeditious manner and Regional Operations Director and the Regional Traffic Operations manager should request that Regional Incident Management Coordinator notify appropriate personnel and assist in coordination. Those lessons learned that are life safety issues within VDOT's area of expertise should be corrected in an expeditious manner. Regional Operations Director or designee should share these findings with District and Residency Leadership and work in conjunction to make corrections.

District Duty Officers -To be familiar with procedure and advocate the usage of it. Attend the After Action Reviews with Regional Incident Management Coordinator if deemed appropriate.

Operations Division - Incident Management Program - Monitors the progress of After Action Reviews, and receives complete After Action Review Reports to keep on file. AARR's will be saved on an electronic file folder and used for statistical reporting. If deemed appropriate the Operations Division – Incident Management program may advocate, and if possible secure funding to assist Regions on a case-by-case basis. Upon request from District Executives, the Operations Division - Incident Management program personnel may conduct an AAR on behalf of the requestor. Personnel assigned to the program will monitor, and change procedures based upon root causes, and outcomes of After Action Reviews.

Appendix

Appendix A

Incident Commander or VDOT Field Commander Input Form

This report should only be completed if you served in the role of Incident Commander or VDOT Field Commander. In some cases, an incident will have had multiple Incident Commanders as the incident escalates. If you served in this role and were relieved, please complete this form for the period of time you served as the Incident Commander or VDOT Field Commander.

Incident Date:

Name:

Agency:

Notification time:

Describe your initial scene assessment upon arrival.

Describe your initial Incident Action Plan.

Describe the assignments given to achieve strategic goals and tactical objectives for your Incident Action Plan.

Describe your plan to manage the safety of resources and personnel at the scene.

Please identify any problems encountered and how you feel they can be resolved.

Identify any Incident Command System problems that you encountered at the scene.



What recommendations do you have that will improve operational or administrative effectiveness?

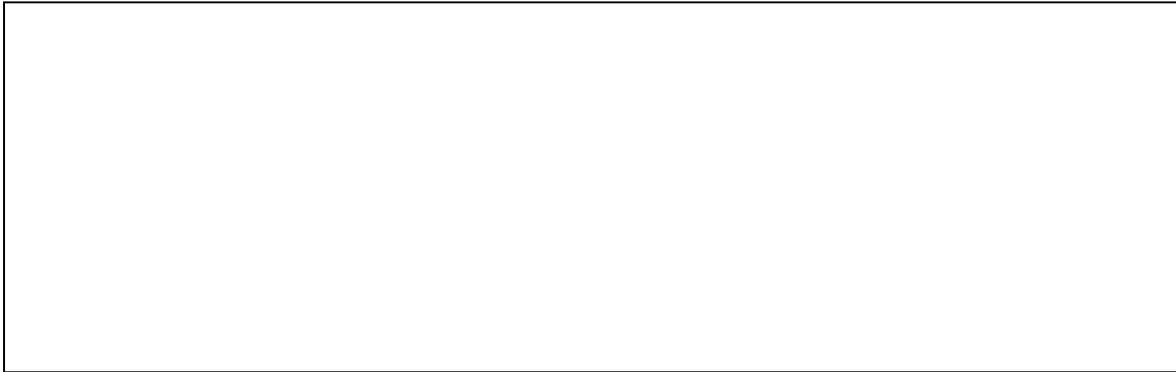


Diagram the Incident Command System organizational structure as it existed at the scene, if deemed appropriate:

Appendix B

Supporting Agency - Incident Input Form

Agency:

Name:

Incident Date:

Notification Time:

Arrived on the scene:

What was your initial scene assessment upon arrival?

What was your function at this incident?

How were the strategic goals and tactical objectives for this incident communicated to you?

What direction were you given, if any?

Were any resources given to you to carry out the strategic goals and tactical objectives? If so, please describe those resources and how you utilized them.

Please describe any problems you encountered and how you resolved them.

Additional comments



Appendix C

AFTER ACTION REPORT

AAR Contact Information

Name: _____ Region /
District: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Incident Background Information

Date: _____ Time: _____ Incident Number #: _____

Road: _____ Direction: _____

County / City: _____ Weather: _____

Total Duration: _____ Other: _____

Brief Incident Description: *(Provide a brief description of the incident, for example: highlighting/identifying the initial scene assessment, Incident Command System (ICS), Overall Incident Commander, VDOT Field Commander & their role in the overall ICS, The overall Incident Action Plan, VDOT's Incident Action Plan, VDOT response & resources used, other agencies involved, and actions taken. This section may include timelines as provided by the Traffic Operations Center and/or other responder sources.)*

Lessons Learned: *(Identify specific areas for improvement and the "root cause(s)" for each.)*

Action Items: *(Identify recommendations to address each lesson-learned, describe corrective actions, identify responsible agency, person assigned to task and assign target completion date.)*

After Action Review Meeting Summary: *(This section is to include the date, time, and location of the After Action Review, the response agencies in attendance, and a brief summary of the review meeting)*

Photos and/or diagrams: *(Please include any photos or diagrams as appropriate to illustrate incident and activities. Graphic patient photos and non-HIPPA compliant identifiers shall not be included)*

AAR Report Submitted by:

Title: _____

Date

Reviewer Confirmation:

Regional Traffic Operations Manager

Date

Regional Operations Director

Date