

Clearing debris from roadways is a critical task for maintaining safe travel conditions, but it presents significant safety risks for involved workers. Roadway debris can range from fallen tree limbs, animals, and vehicle parts to construction materials, all of which pose immediate hazards to motorists and cleanup crews alike. According to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), debris-related incidents contribute to roadway hazards, resulting in numerous crashes and fatalities each year. Nationally, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reports that debris on U.S. roadways causes more than 50,000 crashes, 125 fatalities, and nearly 10,000 injuries annually. Prioritizing safety procedures during debris removal cannot be overstated.

1

Recognize the Hazards: Appraise traffic conditions, weather, and other relevant factors prior to beginning debris removal. Proactively conduct table-top exercises to prepare for incident response and improvement in policies, procedures, and training, before an incident occurs.



2

Observe People, Processes, and Equipment: What are the physical conditions of the area? Is equipment in good working order and are workers properly using it? Do workers have appropriate clothing and personal protective equipment? Are workers empowered to question safety and make suggestions to improve it?



3

Assess the Risk Level: Is it possible to perform this task safely with current training, equipment, and conditions? Conduct an after-action review to see what can be learned and improved upon.

4

Determine the Safest Course of Action: Provide regular training in work zone setup and traffic control measures in accordance with the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Use appropriate best practices, such as advance warning, proper traffic control, preplanning, and training.



5

Don't forget about Personal Protective Equipment: Provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as reflective vests, gloves, safety glasses, appropriate footwear, and specialized PPE when working around insects, animal carcasses, sewage, etc.

LEARN MORE WITH THESE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Texas Department of Insurance Safety Resources](#)
- [Work Zone Safety Clearinghouse](#)
- [TML IRP Media Library](#) Back Injury Prevention for Public Entities DVD #900. Roadway Worker Safety: In the Zone DVD #544, Safety First: Work Area Traffic Control DVD #80, Personal Protective equipment: Your Final Defense DVD #732.