

**From:** [John McCutcheon](#)  
**To:** [Thayer Broili](#)  
**Cc:** [Mike Murray](#); [Darrell Echols](#); [Paul Stevens](#); [Jon Anglin](#); [Kenny Ballance](#); [Britta Muiznieks](#); [Cyndy Holda](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Emergency vehicles in ORV closures  
**Date:** 02/10/2009 11:49 AM

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Thayer,

Yes it is limited. However in the HID, there were a handful of times that a turtle/bird closure blocked the quickest access to the call, which the emergency was in an open area, but blocked by a RM closure (other route options were available, but would have delayed/doubled the response time).

If I recall correctly, they drove in front of the closure along the hard pack inter-tidal area(s). The Hatteras Island Rescue Squad, for the most part, communicates very well with us, despite some of their personal opinions. Bob Halley with HIRS will be contacted again to ensure good communications and what to do. Some of the finer details that could be worked on is that most rescue personnel are volunteers, they respond from work or their homes and in their personal vehicles. Sometimes they (and/or NPS) will get a call, which may not necessarily be a true emergency, yet 10 volunteers show up, each in their personal vehicles. On our part, alot of this depends on protocol and fast communications. It is imperative for our '09 season that all NPS employees will be trained and carry portable radios for on the spot communications.

I will work with RM and HIRS on these measures.



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**Thayer Broili/CAHA/NPS**

02/10/2009 10:55 AM

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**Subject** Re: Emergency vehicles in ORV closures 

Although the question is valid, it would seem that there should be very limited if any need for emergency vehicles to be in closures since they are closures and people aren't suppose to be in them in the first place. Perhaps the Rescue Squads have some responsibility to be aware of the presence of closures on a real time basis so they know how to route around them should an emergency arise.

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▼ Mike Murray/CAHA/NPS

**Mike  
Murray/CAHA/NPS**

02/10/2009 10:16 AM

To Paul Stevens/CAHA/NPS@NPS  
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Subject Emergency vehicles in ORV closures

Paul,

Warren Judge called to inquire on behalf of the Hatteras Island Rescue Squad about what the park policy is on emergency vehicles responding into ORV closures mandated under the consent decree. I advised Warren of the policy in the Interim Strategy (on page 40 of the FONSI), which is still in effect. It states (sections highlighted for emphasis) as follows:

#### **Essential Vehicle Use**

Essential vehicles allowed in closures subject to guidelines in Essential Vehicles section of Appendix G of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), Atlantic Coast Population, Revised Recovery Plan (USFWS 1996a, as cited in the strategy/EA).

In the event of an emergency, the protection of human life takes precedence over all other management activities. To the extent practicable, emergency response vehicle operators will consult with trained resources management staff regarding protected species before driving into or through resource closures; however, prior consultation may not always be practical.

Essential vehicles will avoid driving within turtle nest closures.

**Paul**, since there are questions from the rescue squads, please do some basic preplanning and have the respective DR's talk to the respective water rescue squads and fill them in on the policy. I would emphasize the value of good proactive communication and coordination. In other words, if there is a call that requires response into or through a closed area, the rescue squad should notify park LE staff ASAP and park LE staff should notify park RM staff ASAP and every effort be made to provide for resource protection, if possible, while facilitating a timely emergency response. While protection of life takes precedence over resource protection, it would not be good for anyone involved if nests or chicks were unnecessarily run over during an emergency response if, by our involvement and being present at the scene, we could have reduced the risk of that by advising the rescue squad where the best route would be to minimize resource impacts under the circumstances. Before talking to the rescue squads, please have the respective DR's talk with Britta to see if there is any general advice we can give responding rescuers (e.g., In general, is it better that they drive as close to the water as possible to avoid nests on the upper beach? or, does it depend on the situation?). We need to keep it simple and not burdensome for the responding parties.

**Bottom line:** We'd like the rescue squads to notify us as soon as they know they get a call that requires a response into a closure in order to give us a chance to advise them on any resource protection considerations. We must provide that advice in a way that would not unnecessarily delay them from responding to where they need to go. As the policy says, "prior consultation may not always be practical," so it is important to have a general discussion in advance of an incident (i.e., preplanning).

I would appreciate you and the staff following through so that the rescue squads have a similar understanding.

Thanks,  
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