



**Entrance or  
On Ramp**

**Left or Inside  
Shoulder**

**Right or Outside  
Shoulder**

**Left Lane  
or Lane 1**

**Right Lane  
or Lane 4**

**Left Center  
or Lane 2**

**Right Center  
or Lane 3**

Photo by Ron Moore,  
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## Highway Lane Designations and Terminology

Traffic incident responders use plain English where possible to identify incident location and lane designations. On roadways with 3 or less lanes, they are named left, center, and right when facing in the direction of traffic flow.

- When roadways have more than 3 lanes in any one direction, the lanes shall be identified and labeled with numbers, starting with the far left lane.
- When using lane numbers, the far left lane shall be called “Lane 1”. Each lane to the right is numbered sequentially 2 through n.
- Shoulders should be identified using “right/left” and/or “inside/outside” and the term “shoulder”; The left shoulder is the inside shoulder and the right shoulder is the outside shoulder. (i.e. inside (or left) shoulder, southbound interstate 75)
- Responders should also indicate the relative direction of travel (e.g. northbound or southbound) along with other incident location detail and any specific position assignments. For example an incoming unit might be told to safe park or “block upstream of the incident in Northbound (NB) Highway 75 Lane 3 and right shoulder”.
- Separated, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) or high occupancy toll (HOT), car pool, or bus only lanes that are physically separated shall be designated as HOV1 northbound (NB), HOV2, HOT1, HOT2, etc. as appropriate.
- The term “upstream” is defined as before the incident point or area. The term “downstream” is defined as past or beyond the incident point or area when facing in the direction of traffic flow.