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I-595 Road Rangers return to 24-hour service

By Michael Turnbull
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If your car breaks down at night or on the weekends on Interstate 595, you're in luck.

Beginning Friday, the Road Rangers return to roaming I-595 around the clock, every day of the week.

I-595 Express, the construction team hired to rebuild I-595, is taking over the job of running the service patrol on a 10.5-mile stretch of highway.

Friday is the day that every aspect of I-595 -- from filling potholes, repairing guardrails and removing graffiti to picking up litter, monitoring traffic cameras, displaying messages on those overhead signs, even performing the Road Rangers' duties -- becomes the responsibility of the contractor, not the Florida Department of Transportation.

And not just during I-595's reconstruction, which is slated to begin this fall and last until 2014. But for the next 35 years.

"From the public's vantage point, not much will change. But what will be different and visible are the new Road Rangers," said DOT spokeswoman Laila Haddad.

Road Rangers provide free roadside assistance to motorists and assist in clearing wrecks.

Last year, the Road Rangers' hours of operation were reduced to 6 a.m. till 7 p.m. on weekdays as part of statewide budget cuts.

The four new white trucks, paid for by the contractor, will roam the stretch of I-595 between I-95 and I-75 that will be rebuilt.

Any accident or breakdown has the potential to cause huge problems for the 180,000 motorists a day who travel I-595 between the western suburbs, the airport and Fort Lauderdale. The Road Rangers will help the Florida Highway Patrol reopen lanes as quickly as possible.



The rest of the Road Rangers operated for the DOT by Miami-based Sunshine Towing will continue to cover the eastern end of I-595 not being rebuilt and all other interstates in Broward and Palm Beach counties. Only the I-595 construction zone will get around-the-clock patrols.

The blue signs that post the Road Rangers' hours on I-595 won't be changed to reflect the new service. That's because the signs will be removed anyway when the construction gets under way, said I-595 Express spokeswoman Maggie Cortez Kirkpatrick.

I-595 Express, the name of the team headed by Spanish construction conglomerate ACS Infrastructure Development, won a \$1.79 billion contract to design and rebuild I-595 with three new reversible toll lanes. It also is responsible for operating and maintaining I-595 until 2044.

ACS is financing the project upfront with a combination of its own money, loans from banks and a federal grant. The state won't pay a dime until the construction is finished.

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