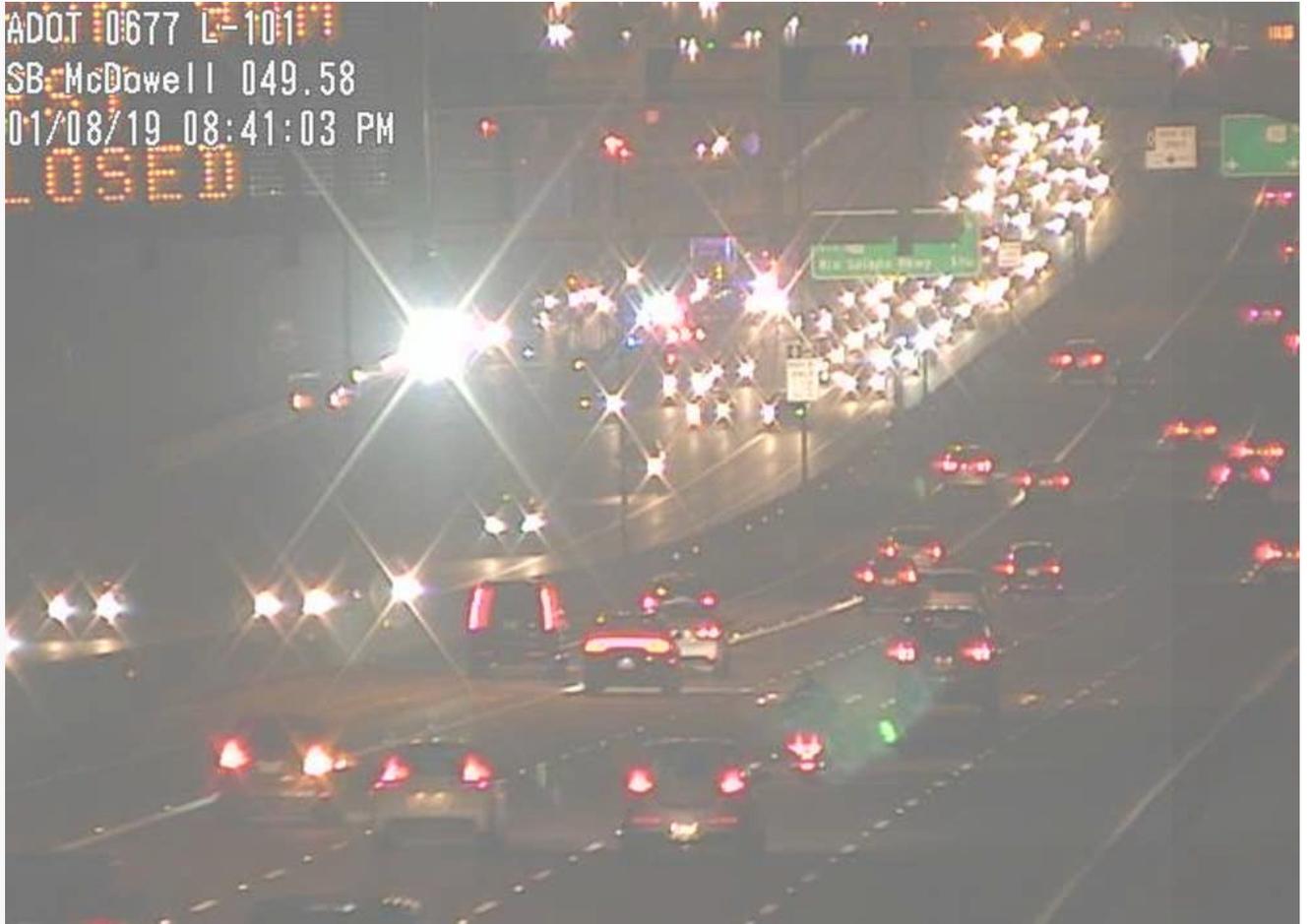


Salt River officer fatally struck during traffic stop on Loop 101 identified

BrieAnna J Frank | Arizona Republic
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A Salt River Tribal police officer was struck and killed by a vehicle along Loop 101 near McDowell Road, Jan. 8, 2019.

Arizona Department of Transportation

A Salt River tribal police officer was fatally struck by a vehicle Tuesday evening while conducting a traffic stop along Loop 101 near Scottsdale, the Arizona Department of Public Safety said.

Officer Clayton Townsend was struck along the northbound Pima Freeway portion of the freeway near McDowell Road, while approaching a vehicle he had pulled over, Salt River Police Chief Karl Auerbach said.

The vehicle that struck Townsend then struck the vehicle he had pulled over, DPS Capt. Jesse Galvez said.

Townsend was pronounced dead at 6:35 p.m. Tuesday, Auerbach said.

Auerbach described Townsend as a "guardian of the people" and "hard worker" who leaves behind a wife and a 10-month-old child.

Auerbach reminded the public to be vigilant and to give officers and other first responders space when they are on the side of the road.

Arizona's "Move Over" law, which went into effect in 2005, requires drivers to move to an adjacent lane if possible when an officer or other emergency vehicle is stopped on or near the side of the road. The law also calls for reduced speeds and extra caution if a lane change isn't possible because of traffic.

Galvez said the driver of the vehicle that struck Townsend appears to be cooperating with the investigation. The driver of the vehicle who initially was pulled over was taken to a hospital with injuries, DPS said. Additional information was not available.

Gov. Doug Ducey said in a tweet that all state flags would be flown at half-staff Wednesday in honor of the fallen officer.

The freeway's northbound lanes were closed as of 9:30 p.m. Tuesday as the investigation continued. The eastbound and westbound on-ramps from Loop 202 to Loop 101, as well as the Rio Salado on-ramp from the northbound Loop 101, were also closed, the Arizona Department of Transportation said.

All northbound Loop 101 traffic was being rerouted at Loop 202.

The stretch of the Loop 101 freeway where the crash occurred is located on the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community east of Scottsdale.

There was no estimated time to reopen the lanes and on-ramps, ADOT said.

No further details were immediately available.

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