

WORK ZONE SAFETY (PWD)

OBJECTIVES

- Staff will learn current practices in setting up safe work zones
- Staff will understand department's policy related to work zone safety

In 2004 there were 1,068 people killed, and 47,570 people injured in work zone crashes. Of the 1,068 people killed in work zones, 837 were in construction zones, while 104 were in maintenance zones. 2004 statistics are a consistent trend.

The Federal MUTCD (Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices) establishes a nationwide standard for anyone who uses or occupies a highway or road for purposes other than travel and who may otherwise affect traffic. Counties are expected to follow the standard simply because there is not other standard. Failure to comply with the standard greatly increases the liability of the organization.

WORK ZONE SAFETY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- To increase the effectiveness and safety of work zones and to minimize potential liabilities the department should:
 - Know and comply with the standards set forth in MUTCD.
 - Provide appropriate and properly working traffic control devices at all work zones (construction and maintenance).
 - Document placement of traffic control devices.
 - Inspect work zones regularly and correct traffic control problems.
 - Remove unneeded material, equipment, and traffic control devices as soon as possible.
 - Provide advance warning and protection to motorists, pedestrians, and workers.
 - Ensure that signing, channelizing and/or other devices reflect current work activities.
 - Flaggers should only be used when they are required to control traffic.

THE WORK ZONE – The work zone typically consists of five parts:

- Advance Warning Area – This area is the most important because it:
 - Gets the driver's attention

- Informs drivers of what to expect ahead
 - Provides drivers with time to react
 - May be reinforced by using three types of signs:
 - General Warning – “ROAD WORK AHEAD”
 - Specific Warning – “ONE LANE ROAD AHEAD”
 - Specific Instructions – “FLAGGER AHEAD”
 - At higher speeds, place the signs every 500 feet
 - At lower speeds, space the signs every 200 feet
 - Should be adjusted for field conditions
- Transition Area – Narrow pavement, reduction of travel lanes, or a lane closure may require moving traffic out of its normal path. The transition area is where change in traffic flow occurs, often through the use of cones or barrels. The area where the actual shift is made is called a taper. The transition area should:
 - Move traffic out of the normal path or flow
 - Provide clear directions so that drivers know where to go
 - Usually involves tapers
 - Vary with speed and distance
- Buffer Area – The unoccupied area between the transition area and the work area is the buffer area. It provides drivers room to stop who do not see or who do not follow the signs or the flagger’s instructions. The length of this area varies from 35 feet to over 400 feet depending on traffic speed, volume, and conditions.
 - The buffer area should be free of:
 - All equipment
 - Vehicles
 - Construction materials
- The buffer area is:
 - A safety factor in case the driver does not stop
 - The place you can adjust for hills or curves
 - A place where vehicles and/or equipment are not allowed
- The Work Area – The work zone is where workers and equipment are located. Channelizing devices are used throughout the area to keep traffic in the proper travel lane and out of the work zone.
 - Work area safety tips:
 - Keep traffic adjacent to the work area moving with the normal flow
 - Remind worker to keep themselves and equipment out of the travel lanes
 - Caution flaggers to avoid drifting into the traffic
 - In certain situations you may need flaggers to control or slow down traffic
 - Be sure to properly deal with the side roads
- Termination Area:
 - This area advises drivers that they are past the work area and they may resume normal driving:
 - It is good practice to put an “END ROAD WORK” sign
 - A short down stream taper (five cones in 100 feet) is also recommended

POLICY

Discuss all department policies that relate to work zone safety.

CLOSING

- *Combining the five parts of the work zone results in a “TRAFFIC CONTROL PLAN” (TCP). Your TCP should be planned and reviewed with staff before road work begins.*
- *Staff should review and understand the department’s policy regarding work zones and how to set them up.*
- *Encourage discussion about the presentation, department policies, and necessary steps to keep staff and motorists safe.*