

Make safe work zones a priority

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

and maintenance projects require coordinating workers, equipment, special events and sometimes the weather. Another item on the must-do list for any project that affects the flow of traffic is setting up safe work zones in and around the job site. Like other operations, doing it right takes training.

Local street and highway departments in Wisconsin and contractors that work with them can tap the resources of the Transportation Information Center (TIC) for a choice of training programs that help keep their employees up to date on work zone safety. Besides the one-day workshops TIC presents annually at locations throughout the state, officials responsible for local roads can book work zone or flagger training courses that instructors can customize and present at their location.

Teach uniform approach

TIC instructor Jim Schneider says his goal with these on-site courses is to include everything participants need to know about follow-

including pothole and bump repairs, culvert repair and replacement and work on intersections.

Other projects include milling asphalt overlays on bridges down to the concrete to do repairs. Elstran says he expects to manage precise profiling that does not go to full depth, allowing work crews to remove as little as 2 inches of the road surface without affecting the base layers.

Small-scale solution

Judging from the experience of Sheboygan County and other highway departments, Elstran anticipates making efficient use of his department's equipment and people with this application. The reclamation attachment offers local road officials a good option for integrating FDR as a solution for more small-scale road improvement projects. ■

ing federal standards to lay out temporary traffic control zones and set up a flagging operation. "The course content is based on requirements in the MUTCD, but also on what we hear from participants about specific issues," Schneider explains. "We keep our approach pertinent so the information they take away relates to what they're actually doing."

The programs cover the basics and specify correct procedures on urban or rural roadways.

Where a local government plans to contract with an outside firm on projects, they often include employees of the company in the training so all workers understand the essentials of work zone safety and their role in it. TIC instructors sometimes use actual problem areas identified by the local department in the hands-on portion of the workshop, asking participants to lay out traffic control measures for sites they know.

Schneider says this generates suggestions that provide the framework for a learning give-and-take that helps them consider outcomes in a realistic light. "Our goal is to train supervisors and workers on how to make a work zone safe and efficient, teaching them to adopt the standards uniformly for all projects."

Building confidence

The Marathon County Highway Department plans to bring in the TIC to conduct its day-long workshop on every aspect of work zone safety for about 70 employees this spring. Assistant Operations Supervisor Kris Baguhn is asking Schneider to emphasize use of TIC's *Work Zone Safety* flipbook. He keeps one in every truck so workers have a reliable resource available for scheduled work or emergencies.

"I want a way to get everyone uniform in how they set up a work zone and use the safety precautions for flagging outlined in the book—like wearing the required clothing, using the correct

Media sheds light on work zone crashes

Risks to drivers traveling near or through highway work zones was the subject of a December 2009 *New York Times* article that raised the question of whether there is adequate and uniform enforcement of national safety standards. The story surveyed more than 100 legal cases involving work zone crashes. It described incidents where problems like edge drops or the absence of warning signs led to vehicle fatalities. Highway officials who commented for the article acknowledged work zone crashes are a concern but stopped short of attributing them to deficient work zone traffic controls or lack of oversight. The coverage sheds critical light on the problem, noting that federal standards do address operations in temporary traffic control zones set up for routine maintenance and major road projects. It also draws attention to the public's concern about work zone traffic safety and the liability risk to government agencies when something goes wrong. For local road officials, the story underscores the need to train employees in uniform safe procedures and make work zone inspections a standard of operation to reduce the likelihood of crashes or injuries. Check archives at <http://www.nytimes.com/> for "Efforts Lag to Improve Safety at Work Zones," *New York Times*, December 21, 2009.

signs," Baguhn says. "To me, learning to use the flipbook is the best way to build people's confidence."

As training scenarios, Baguhn concentrates on typical road and utility projects where proper flagging is essential. These include crack filling and paving on state and county roads, ditching and culvert cleaning, brush removal in right-of-ways, minor bridge repairs and shouldering on four-lane highways. And when bigger projects come up he says having workers familiar with the "book of rules" assures him they will know how to create work zones that work—for his project crews and the driving public. Go to the *Calendar* for On-Site Workshop listing. Contact TIC to learn more and book a program. ■

Contact

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Resource

<http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/workshops/listing.lasso>

Page on TIC site with complete workshop information.