

Idea Exchange

Undercutting blade improves shoulders

Crews in the Clay County, South Dakota, highway shop have fabricated a moldboard extension that cleanly cuts away shoulder material. An old moldboard extension is modified and bolted to the



frog of a motor grader's moldboard. It is used to undercut and move existing vegetation and base/subgrade out onto the road's fore slope. It works best when following a lead grader equipped with a cutting wheel that creates a clean, straight edge to the pavement.

The process forms a bench approximately 8" deep and 36" wide with solid footing on which to add new base material. The next steps—filling the undercut area with properly graded aggregate, striking off, and compacting—produce a solid, well-shaped shoulder.

Adapted from SD LTAP Special Bulletin #47 "Shoulder Widening to Improve Roadway Safety." Copies available from the T.I.C. (See page 7).

Safety training makes seasonal workers more productive

Spring, when grass needs cutting and road projects begin, also marks the arrival of seasonal employees. For many supervisors, seasonals are a critical resource. Giving them appropriate safety and equipment training is one way to ensure good productivity. It can also help protect budgets from worker's comp costs and increased premiums.

"We started training them about five years ago because our seasonals are such a vital part of our work force," says Beloit Operations and Transit Director Chris Walsh. "We are really short-staffed and we need them to perform." They found that many safety rules and regulations were not being followed. Now, before seasonals can go to work, they spend at least a day in a classroom and up to several days learning on the job.

In the classroom, the City's Safety Coordinator walks the new workers through an employee handbook. It includes required forms, work rules and behavior expectations. They are introduced to employee values and workplace policies on violence, harassment and drugs. All are trained and tested in safety essentials like Lockout/Tagout, Confined

Space Entry, Hazard Communication/Right to Know, and Defensive Driving.

Next the seasonal employees go through on-site training. Some topics are general, like locating the First Aid kit, finding and using personal protective equipment, or what to do in case of fire or tornado. Others are specific to the job and equipment. "If they're on a sign crew, they learn how to set up a work zone. If they're on a lawn mower and weed whip, they learn how to operate them," says Walsh.

While they are employed, seasonals also sit in on the regular safety training programs required of full-time workers. Beloit does 70 safety trainings a year for its staff, each a half to two hours long.

Is it worth the effort? Last year there was only one accident among the 20 seasonal parks and operations workers in Beloit. "We have just about eliminated seasonal accidents and our Workers Comp costs are way down, too," says Walsh.

Getting started

Beloit's seasonal employee training is part of its comprehensive city-wide worker

safety program. It required considerable effort and commitment from supervisors and city leaders, and it has paid off.

In addition to fewer payments for injured workers, the City of Beloit is saving a lot of money in Workers Compensation Insurance premiums because of their good history. Premiums are 33% lower this year, says Rick Bayer, Manager of Loss Control for Cities and Villages Mutual Insurance Company (CVMIC), Beloit's insurer.

Any community could begin with a simplified program for their seasonal

continued on page 8

Roads at night

from page 1

Some communities have adopted computerized sign inventory systems. A variety of commercial programs are available. The University of New Hampshire LTAP program offers one for \$25. The Windows-compatible "Sign Inventory Management System—SIMS02" is designed for small to medium-sized county highway agencies. <http://www.t2.unh.edu/pwms/sims.html>

Whatever approach you take, it's your responsibility to make your roads safe at night. Don't let your signs go dark. Also, be sure to voice your opinions to the FHWA when it publishes the retro-reflectivity guidelines later this year.

*For information on signs and pavement markings see the T.I.C.'s newly revised bulletins: **Signing for Local Roads**, No. 7, and **Pavement Markings**, No. 9. See page 7 to request print copies or visit our Website: <http://tic. engr.wisc.edu/publications>.*

Crossroads

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Safety training *from page 2*

workers. Reviewing a handbook like the one Beloit uses is a good start. Its topics can help you decide what kind of training your short-term workers need.

"It's helpful to distinguish between technical training like operating a lawnmower and training on the standards required by the Department of Commerce," says Bayer. "If they handle various chemicals such as pesticides for example, then they need 'right-to-know' training."

Don't delay training until all the seasonals have come on board. If you do, some of them may work a month or more without training. One approach is to hire in blocks. Start workers every Monday in the end of May and beginning of June, Bayer suggests. Everyone reports for work that day, fills out forms, and attends classroom training, and you only have to run 3-4 training programs.

Having a written handbook also helps the newcomers. They can review the information later and will have a reference for forms, procedures and contact names. In addition to policies,

work rules and standards, it's nice to have other general information, says Bayer. A welcome letter from the mayor, information on the city, and general information on the department, for example, help establish a positive image.

Bayer, who previously worked in local government, offers workshops on the topic which are free to CVMIC members and open to others for a small fee. Other organizations, like the League of Municipalities and the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association, also offer support to members in this area.

"In my experience, the better the orientation and training, the fewer seasonal employees are going to get hurt," says Bayer. "Unfortunately, a lot of cities and employers simply don't do much in this area." Now's the time to get started.

Contact the T.I.C. (page 7) for copies of Beloit's Seasonal Employee Handbook. Also, see Resources on page 6 for new safety training videotapes. CVMIC training programs are listed on their Web page: www.cvmic.com.

New MUTCD published

The FHWA has published the 2003 edition of the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*. It is available for viewing and downloading at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov>.

You may wish to review it there. However, it does not take effect in Wisconsin until the state DOT revises and adopts the *Wisconsin Supplement*, probably by late 2004. Until that happens, the Millennium edition of the *MUTCD* and current Wisconsin Supplement remain in effect.

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