

# Work zone safety: A management responsibility

by Don Walker, Director, T.I.C.

Both work crews and the traveling public are at risk during highway maintenance and construction. Crashes in Wisconsin work zones number more than 2,000 each year, with over 700 injuries and 10 fatalities. In addition, drivers are delayed and inconvenienced. Construction managers, maintenance managers and field supervisors are responsible for making work sites safe and functional.

### Know what to do and train your staff to do it.

A new, comprehensive training program for local agency, contracting firm, and utility leaders is being developed by WisDOT and the Transportation Information Center. A workshop to prepare supervisors and trainers to train their employees as flaggers was held in April. (See story page 4.)

**Practice safety every day.** Management and supervisors play the critical role in this. Make it clear to your employees that safe and effective work zones are a priority by supplying both leadership and resources.

**Assign resources.** Crew training and effective traffic control devices are basic to safe work zones. But management must go further. Set staffing levels and prepare schedules that give crews the time and resources to set up

and operate work zones properly. Don't let job productivity override necessary work zone safety provisions.

Workers take their cues from management. If they know safety is a top priority, it will get done on the job. If they know management is more interested in production than safety, this is also reflected in their practice.

**Inspect.** Managers should inspect work zones regularly. Check especially that the signing is appropriate to the work. Nothing breeds driver disrespect for work zone controls faster than signs left in place after work has stopped for the day or weekend or when the project is finished. Consider pedestrian and bicycle needs especially in urban areas.

**Enforce standards.** Agency managers must assure that all contractors, utilities, and others working in the public right of way use the same work zone safety standards. Management has the authority to enforce uniform standards on their roadways and this is an important management responsibility.

Work zone safety is an important issue and the leadership must come from the top. Plan to actively participate in upcoming training sessions and follow through with your workers on projects.


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