

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE and SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEES

PUBLIC HEARING ON ENHANCING THE SAFETY OF HIGHWAY WORKERS, DRIVERS AND PEDESTRIANS

JULY 14, 2015

PennDOT: TRAFFIC CONTROL, SIGNAGE and WORK ZONE SET-UP

Introduction

The Department would like to begin by thanking the House and Senate Transportation Committee members for the opportunity to discuss the current state and future of the Department's Work Zone Program with the Committees.

With the passing of Act 89 and the Rapid Bridge Replacement P3 project, the number of work zones on Pennsylvania roadways is increasing. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon all of us to do everything we can to make these work zones safe to prevent work zone crashes.

When motorists are alert, obey traffic control devices (signs and pavement markings), maintain the posted speed limit, and pay attention to traffic patterns, the safety of everyone is enhanced. To address this fact head on, PennDOT continues to focus on traffic control, signage and work zone set-up improvements.

Existing Program

Each year the Department evaluates its work zone program to implement new policies and/or strategies to improve work zone safety and mobility. Some of the most recent and successful initiatives regarding **traffic control, signage and work zone set-up** include:

- Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) for assistance, including work zone queue protection and traffic enforcement on interstate and other freeways. This agreement was developed to optimize the use of the State Police's limited resources while maintaining the flexibility to have them onsite at the most critical locations in a timely manner.
- The use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology within work zones to monitor traffic conditions and warn drivers of potential hazards in real time. For example, to help address recurring queue crashes in a work zone along I-80 in Clarion County, the Department recently installed an automated queue detection and warning system.
- Updates to PennDOT Publication 213, the Department's guideline on temporary traffic control. These updates promote the consistent use of advance warning signs and establish new flagger apparel requirements for enhanced safety and visibility.
- Updates to an existing policy to streamline the approval process for use of pedestal-mounted, temporary traffic signals which removes the human flagger from the roadway.
- Lastly, updates to our specifications to allow sequential lights at merging tapers. Sequential lights are a series of interconnected, synchronized flashing warning lights that improve delineation and encourage drivers to merge sooner.

Future Program

With a safety goal of reducing fatalities and major injury crashes by 50% before 2030, PennDOT has been aggressively examining our current practices and developing new strategies to meet that goal. In 2014, the Department underwent an independent safety evaluation of its work zone program to highlight areas of improvement and need. The following is a partial list of future initiatives that resulted from that study along with recommendations from Department leadership:

- Update the Memorandum of Understanding with PSP to expand its coverage and reduce prior notice requirements.

- Expand the use of ITS technologies to improve work zone safety.
- Establish a work zone manager policy which would require a certified individual to be present on every work zone to ensure compliance on a daily basis.
- Continue to support Automated Speed Enforcement legislation and continue to coordinate with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission to create regulation, policy and an implementation plan as legislation moves forward.
- Host a joint agency Work Zone Safety Summit with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission to collect industry input to refine policies and promote new, innovative work zone safety strategies
- Continue to support the research and development of connected vehicle technology through participation in national technical committees.

Challenges

Past history shows all of us that innovation and technology-based safety solutions are rarely without cost and can consume significant resources which must be addressed. Accordingly, we continue to support:

- Passage of Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) legislation to allow the Department to create an ASE pilot program in work zones.
- Addressing concerns from municipalities on how work zone requirements affect their staffing levels and budgets. One example is the requirement for shadow vehicles to provide protection for mowing operations.
- Securing additional PSP resources to allow expansion of the existing MOU to provide additional enforcement and presence for all roadways. Our contracting partners have expressed their concern over recent examples of limited PSP support due to the current MOU requirements.

Conclusion

On a national basis, 48% of all work zone crashes result in an injury or fatality. Since 2005, Pennsylvania has seen an average of 23 deaths per year due to crashes in work zones. The people affected by these crashes are more than statistics; they are our coworkers, friends and family members. As a result, the Department strives every day to improve work zone safety for both motorists and workers. Please note that not all of the Department's work zone initiatives were mentioned today. Only the initiatives that relate to traffic control, signage and work zone set-ups were discussed. The Department takes great pride in work zone safety and has a number of additional safety initiatives that it will move forward with in the coming years to improve safety for both the motorist and worker.

On behalf of the Department, I appreciate your time and allowing me to speak with you today.

SOURCES:

https://www.workzonesafety.org/news_events/awareness_week/2015/artba_talking_points

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EXAMPLES OF WORKER FATALITIES:

<http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/articles/2014/06/01/region/doc538be7b1dbffb637224664.txt>

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