Everyday Road Safety
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Road Safety 365
Available online at LTAP website:
www.purdue.edu/inltap
Learning Outcomes

Things you and your local agency personnel can do to improve safety in your community:

– Develop a “safety attitude.”

– Learn how to “read the road.”
What is a safety attitude and how can you empower your employees? Here's a true story from PA that'll explain it.

Over time, during a harsh winter, a large hole in the pavement surface developed near a joint in the deck of a highway bridge. A small car carrying a family struck the hole and went out of control, leaving its lane of travel. As it crossed into the adjacent lane, it was struck broadside by a large truck. All occupants of the car were killed in the crash. Family members filed a lawsuit against the highway agency, alleging deficient maintenance of the roadway surface. As the case proceeded and the discovery process unfolded, it came to light that about 1-2 hours before the crash, a highway agency sign crew had driven across the bridge on the way to their job site. They reported that they saw the hole in the surface of the deck. When asked by the attorney why they did not report the hole, crew members responded, “It was not our concern. We are a sign crew; our job is to install and maintain signs.” The jury found for the plaintiff and awarded them a significant sum of money. When highway agency attorneys talked to jurors after the trial, jurors told them that it made them mad to hear agency employees say that reporting a defect in the roadway was not their job. The jurors felt that everyone in the agency should be looking out for the safety of the traveling public. Soon after the trial concluded, the highway agency developed and publicized a program for agency employees called “Extra Eyes for Maintenance.” The program asked all agency employees, even those like clerical and shop personnel whose jobs did not normally take them out on the road, to be extra eyes to look for roadway hazards they see on the road anytime they are driving—even if it is to/from work or the store. By reporting these conditions they could be saving lives and limiting tort claims brought against the agency. Conditions employees were asked to report included: potholes, shoulder defects (including edge of pavement drop-offs), water and icy spots, traffic sign deficiencies, damaged guardrail and work zone problems.

A safety attitude includes being more aware of the roadway and roadside in looking for potentially hazardous conditions. But there is more to it than that. Basically, a safety attitude means bringing road safety into daily operations. A safety attitude includes learning how to read the road to identify problems. A safety attitude means following established/accepted procedures in carrying out day-to-day activities. It also means making the effort to keep up with new techniques and technology, such as rumble stripes and road safety audits, that enhance motorist safety or help us do more with less. This means that training should be a part of your agency's operations. This includes training not only for you but for those whom you supervise as well as those above you in the agency chain of command.

Let’s look at how you can incorporate a program like PA’s…
Safety Attitude

- Report what you see
- Empower all personnel
- Encourage everyone in community
  - Law enforcement
  - Emergency responders
  - School bus drivers
  - Mail carriers
Now we will look in detail at one aspect of a safety attitude: Reading the Road.

**Safety Attitude**

How can I encourage a safety attitude?

- Possible Methods
  - Personnel:
    - Tailgate meetings
    - Staff meetings
  - Community:
    - Hotline/dedicated number
    - Website/email
    - Social media

- Prioritize
Reading the road on a daily basis results from adopting a “safety attitude.” It can save lives.

If this was a road you were on, what would you think? Is this an isolated incident? Multiple skid marks, skipping skid marks (indicative of slamming on breaks hard) May not be a reported crash at this location, but skid marks tell me there’s an issue.
Reading the road should become a daily habit. All it takes is desire and a little practice.
Talk to property owner – do they see crashes there often?

**Question:** What do you see? Describe the contributing factors to this issue.

**Answer:** Skid marks are present which is the tire marks crossing the centerline. Possibly an indication of steering overcorrection. Commonly associated with pavement edge drop-offs as drivers overcorrect and go out of control in trying to bring their vehicle back onto the roadway.

**Question:** Who would be responsible for correcting this problem?

**Answer:** Road owner - Local road authority.

Possible solution – safety edge, edgeline rumble strips
You might not be aware of a crash that occurred here, but there are indications of one. The scar on the tree is indicative of a roadway departure. The tree’s location close to the edge of the traveled way leaves very little room for driver error.

Possible solution – ? Look at the roadway prior to these trees (there’s a curve with a history of ponding), so perhaps it’s the pavement, the curve, the ponding or a combination of all three.
Plugged drain, low spot in road, etc??
Imagine that at night with reduced visibility, lane markings probably not visible, your
windshield gets splashed…
The question is what can be done and where does it sit on the priority list?

Possible solution – clean drainage structures, look at pavement design
The object markers have been struck in the past and are not properly aligned. The upstream (front) object marker also blocks the view of the plaque underneath the stop sign that states “Cross Traffic Does Not Stop.” The edge drop offs may prevent drivers from taking control of their vehicle if they run off the road.

Possible solutions – safety edge, reassess length of guardrail, extend it out, relocate signs
This is a stop sign.

Old broken sign posts plus they documented all the times the sign’s been put back up
Chances are that’s not a reported crash – they just knock it over and keep on going

It is possible that the sign is repeatedly knocked down by out-of-control vehicles that run off the road; or perhaps the sign is being knocked down by turning commercial vehicles. The safety hazard this creates is that unfamiliar drivers face an uncontrolled intersection approach and will likely enter the intersection without stopping. Obviously, maintenance personnel are aware of the situation since they keep re-erecting the sign.

Do you think you need to just keep putting it back up? Or maybe figure out what’s going on here?
I want my maintenance person to come tell me what’s going on there, not just keep replacing the sign.

Having a safety attitude means either diagnosing the problem yourself or reporting this to a supervisor who can identify the problem and take appropriate corrective action.
This guardrail had been replaced multiple times. When asked, the foreman said this was his worst area and he was out there frequently to repair/replace the guardrail.
Possible solutions – short-term: better warning signs w/advisory speed
Long-term: cut down hill on approach and change bridge approach alignment
What do you see?
Solution – trim vegetation
Can you name others?

streetsweeping
Steps in Crash Reduction Process

1. Identify the site
2. Determine crash pattern
3. Visit the site
4. Identify contributing factors
5. Assess and select countermeasures
6. Implement countermeasures
Think of an example in your jurisdiction. Do you know why crashes are happening? Do you know how to fix it?
If not, ask for help from HELPERS.

Does anyone want to share theirs?

You never know whose life you might save.
Practice on your drive home today.
What does the phrase “reading the road” mean?

Looking for indications that road users may be having problems traveling a section of roadway.

Being observant to potential safety issues
Briefly describe the PennDot program “Extra Eyes for Safety.”

Safety program encouraging everyone in the community to be on the look out for problems along the roadway.
Questions?

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