



moving FORWARD

SPRING 2010

A quarterly review of news and information about Pennsylvania local roads.

Time To Order Roadsalt For Next Winter

Don't Be Left Out in the Cold!

Although the current winter season is winding down, it's time to sign up for next winter's COSTARS Roadsalt Contract. The 2010-2011 Salt Participation Agreement is now posted on the Members page of the COSTARS Web site (www.dgs.state.pa.us/costars) and members have until March 15 to complete the agreement. If you missed the deadline this year, keep that date in mind for next year.

This Department of General Services (DGS) roadsalt contract secures more than one million tons of salt for Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation (PennDOT), as well as the salt requirements for COSTARS members that wish to participate. The number of COSTARS members that have participated has grown substantially over the last several years. The current contract includes 1,440 COSTARS members, an increase of 36% over the year before. These members represent 756,000 tons, which, when added to PennDOT requirements, makes Pennsylvania's salt contract one of the nation's largest. That buying power has produced lower costs for COSTARS participants. Pennsylvania's average cost per ton of \$56.99 in the current contract represents substantial savings to local and state taxpayers compared to West Virginia's price of \$68.88 or Ohio's price of \$58.97.

The Salt Participation Agreement is a simple one-page document, which can be completed and submitted electronically. It is a legally binding contract, but has substantial flexibility built in for COSTARS members. For example, participants are only obligated to purchase 60% of their stated needs, but can buy up to 140% of their needs at the contracted price, depending upon the severity of the winter.

After compiling the total needs of the



participants, DGS goes to bid in the spring and awards the contracts, by county, in July. The contract is posted on the COSTARS Web site in early August.

Apart from the state, only registered COSTARS members may participate. The roadsalt is guaranteed to meet PennDOT requirements and, therefore, municipalities may use their Liquid Fuel Funds.

COSTARS members can gain similar procurement savings by utilizing more than 250 other state contracts for commodities and services ranging from tires, computers, gasoline, aggregates, vehicles, power equipment, office supplies, food, equipment maintenance, small package delivery, and almost everything else. The roadsalt contract is unique as it is the only contract requiring an advance commitment to purchase.

For further information on the COSTARS program, call 1-866-768-7827. ♦

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PennDOT Develops a Temporary Traffic Control Handbook for Municipalities

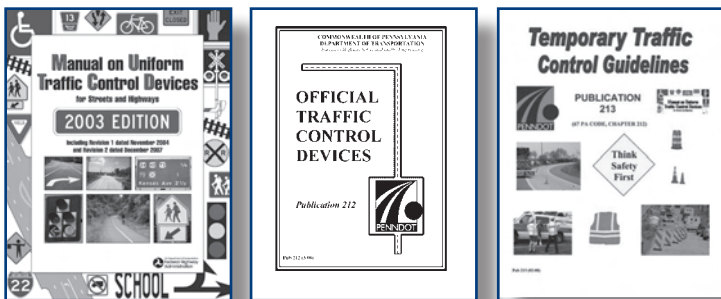
by Stephen Thompson

PennDOT has developed a Temporary Traffic Control Handbook for Municipalities this year. The Handbook will be accompanied by a Pocket Guide, which is a concise version of the Handbook in an easy to carry and use format.



Temporary traffic control is primarily about safety and managing traffic in work zones, so when we hear the term we typically think about closing a lane and placing flaggers at the ends of the work zone. However, temporary traffic control includes other issues, such as occasional traffic incidents that close lanes of traffic, or more commonly, moving operations such as mowing. The purpose of the Handbook and Pocket Guide is to assist operations planners and on-site supervisors with quickly finding the information they need to set up safe and efficient temporary traffic control, whatever their operation and conditions.

This Handbook combines temporary traffic control information from many sources, but primarily from FHWA's *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD), PennDOT's Publication 212, *Official Traffic Control Devices*, PennDOT's Publication 213, *Temporary Traffic Control Guidelines*, and PennDOT Publication 236M, *Handbook of Approved Signs*.



Recognizing that a single handbook containing guidance for every possible operations scenario would be so voluminous that it would not be usable, this Handbook contains guidance useful for most operations, most of the time. To cover unusual operations or conditions, the Handbook also contains references to appropriate regulatory or guidance documents, assisting operations planners with locating practical information quickly and easily.

The Temporary Traffic Control Handbook for Municipalities was developed by LTAP traffic engineers and includes information from the LTAP Temporary Traffic Control (Work Zone Traffic Control) course. In fact, the LTAP course was updated concurrently with the development of this Handbook, by the same LTAP team, ensuring consistency between the two. What you learn from the LTAP course

will be what you will find in the new Handbook. Further, the language, diagrams, and photos in the Handbook and Pocket Guide will be similar to those elements in the LTAP course, enhancing familiarity to municipal operations personnel who have taken the Temporary Traffic Control course.

The importance of appropriately controlling traffic during temporary lane and shoulder closures cannot be overstated. Work zones and other lane or shoulder closures represent an unusual and unexpected condition for motorists. When motorists approach a work zone or temporary lane closure, what they expect to see is changed, causing confusion. They probably cannot see the entire operation and are unable to quickly make informed decisions about how to proceed. To inform motorists of the work and the unexpected condition, workers must properly place signs, cones, and other devices.



During the year 2005, Pennsylvania experienced 32 work zone fatalities; 25 in construction areas, five in maintenance areas, and two in utility work areas. These numbers were roughly double those from the year before. In 2004 there were 16 work zone fatalities: 10 in construction areas, five in maintenance areas, and one in a utility work area. These figures include all work zones in the state, so many are on state-owned roads, however, about 10% of all work zone crashes/fatalities occur on local roads. Because the scope of a particular lane or shoulder closure is familiar to operations planners and on-site supervisors, they bear the burden of guiding motorists through the work zone safely and efficiently.

Besides the potential human toll in terms of injuries and fatalities in work zones, municipalities want to make temporary lane and shoulder closures as safe as possible. There is a monetary concern for municipalities in the form of tort liability. PennDOT pays

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Liquid Fuels Allocation Announced

by Bob Garrett, PennDOT Municipal Liaison

According to Craig Reed, Director of PennDOT's Bureau of Municipal Services, municipalities can plan on receiving their annual liquid fuels allocations from the state based on \$2,136 per municipal-owned mile of roadway and \$12.53 per person based on the latest census. "Unfortunately, this represents a 4% decrease from 2009's allocation," says Reed. He added that, "These are certainly tight budget times for those of us in the road and bridge business."

To ensure that your municipality receives its liquid fuels payment on time, it's critical to submit your PennDOT forms on time. Reed stated that, "You may use dotGrants or another format this year. The dotGrants system is our preference. However, municipalities may use Excel® based spreadsheets or other hard-copy systems to submit their required PennDOT forms."

It is also very important for municipalities to submit their DCED forms in by March 15th so that payment comes in on April 1st. The internal Commonwealth check writing procedures takes two weeks to complete so if you wait to the end of March to submit your DCED



forms there's no way that your municipality will receive its liquid fuels payments in the first round on April 1st.

Call your PennDOT Municipal Service Representative if you have any questions or concerns about completing the needed forms or about your liquid fuels payments in general. ♦

PennDOT's dotGrants System

The goal of PennDOT's new on-line, Web-based liquid fuels reporting system is to increase performance, resulting in improved access to liquid fuels information using an electronic filing system. And as of October 2009, half of Pennsylvania's municipalities have logged onto this system and are using it.

According to Vicky Evans of Logan Township in Blair County, "The system is a real time saver for us and it's very easy to use." Eventually the dotGrants system will replace all of the other methods that municipalities are using to file their required PennDOT forms. Evans reported that, "I like the fact that I can access our liquid fuels records from any computer and that I'm not tied down to a file cabinet or database."

The dotGrants system is being used to manage both liquid fuels and turnback payments. For 2010, the liquid fuels payments are being based on an estimated \$2,136 per mile of municipal roadway and \$12.53 per municipal resident. The turnback mileage reimbursement was raised to \$4,000 per mile a few years ago.

During 2010, PennDOT is encouraging all municipalities to transition to the dotGrants on-line system. Classroom style training will continue to be offered as well as one-on-one training to ensure that every municipality has staff trained to use the dotGrants system. Municipalities that currently use paper submissions will be given priority for this training. Training will be advertised through flyers and with personal contacts from the Municipal Services Representatives.

The dotGrants system allows municipalities to generate reports, manage their annual allocations and view their actual payment dates in "real time." The system also enables municipal officials to electronically file their year-end reports such as the Actual Usage Report that is known as the MS-965. In one "viewer friendly" Web site, dotGrants users are able to obtain much of the information that they need to manage the liquid fuels funds that are received from PennDOT.

Evans said it best when she pointed out, "There is no downside to this system. It's made our job easier and it will do the same for any municipality that logs onto it." ♦

Making Pennsylvania's Roads Safer: An Update

PennDOT's Local Safe Roads Communities and Walkable Communities Programs continue to assist municipalities throughout the state

by Stephen R. Thompson

The Summer 2009 issue of *Moving Forward* contained an article entitled *Making Pennsylvania's Roads Safer: PennDOT's Local Safe Roads Communities and Walkable Communities Programs Strive to Enhance Safety on Local Roads*. The focus of these programs is to enhance local road safety through the use of low-cost safety countermeasures. At the time that article was published, the programs had been operating for about a year and LTAP traffic safety engineers had delivered approximately 15 study reports with safety recommendations to participating municipalities. Since that time, LTAP has been tracking the expansion of these programs as more communities participate, and reporting the results of follow-up communications with those communities that have had their reports for more than six months.

Of the 15 reports and recommendations that had been delivered to participating communities as of last summer, seven were Local Safe Roads Communities reports, and eight were Walkable Communities reports. Since that time an additional 11 Local Safe Roads Communities reports have been delivered, with 11 more studies in progress. Also, an additional three Walkable Communities reports have been delivered, and eight more studies are in progress.

Written into both the Local Safe Roads Communities and Walkable Communities programs is a follow-up procedure specifying that LTAP traffic safety engineers contact participating communities about six months after the delivery of their reports to learn if municipalities have implemented, or are planning to implement the safety recommendations made in their reports. Thus far, five Local Safe Roads Communities follow-up contacts have been made, and five Walkable Communities follow-up contacts have been made. Individual community leaders continue to be enthusiastic about these programs and their potential to mitigate safety risk.

During follow-up conversations, LTAP engineers learned that the implementation of safety measures is, as expected, often tied to the availability of funding. Also, the timing of the delivery of the reports with relation to construction seasons or budget-making processes also seems to affect the timing of the installation of safety measures. For example, if a report is delivered in January or February, the municipality is focused on winter maintenance and the budget for the following construction season may already be in place. The result is that some municipalities cannot yet report implementation of the recommended safety measures despite their enthusiasm for the programs and their expectation that recommended safety countermeasures will be implemented in the future.

Despite funding and timing issues, every municipality contacted has reported some engagement with their recommended safety measures, whether in terms of planning, preparing, or installing those countermeasures. In most cases, the lowest cost recommendations are typically signs and pavement markings. Lower Moreland Township in Montgomery County is participating in the Local Safe Roads Communities Program, and intends to implement every safety recommendation. Shortly after receiving their report, officials there

ordered all the signs recommended in their report, have received those signs, and were installing those signs during late autumn 2009. Clarion Borough in Clarion County installed many of the signs and pavement markings recommended, but has to plan and budget for changes to their traffic signal system and the signs associated with that system. An official at Clarion Borough indicated that the higher-cost recommendations in the report are useful for planning and budgeting purposes, so that improvements can be made in the future. This comment underscores an important aspect of these programs: although low-cost safety countermeasures may be made immediately,

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Did you know?

Fascinating facts and useful trivia

During the year 2008, there were approximately 91,400 crashes on state-owned highways in Pennsylvania, compared to approximately 34,000 crashes on local roads. While the number of crashes on local roads is significantly lower than on state-owned roads, the crash rate, or the number of crashes associated with vehicle miles traveled, is actually higher for local roads. The crash rate on state-owned highways was 1.02 crashes per million vehicle miles compared to the crash rate on local roads of 1.79 per million vehicle miles.

Also, there were 1,232 fatalities on state-owned highways in Pennsylvania last year, compared to 236 fatalities on local roads. The fatality rate on state-owned highways was 1.38 per 100 million vehicle miles compared to the fatality rate on local roads of 1.24 per 100 million vehicle miles. Although for year 2008 the fatality rate on local roads was lower than the fatality rate on state-owned roads, this is a change from the previous four years during which the fatality rate on local roads was slightly higher than the fatality rate on state-owned highways.

2008 Pennsylvania Crash Facts and Statistics



Crosswalk warning signs and signal – Clarion Borough, Clarion County



Crosswalk warning signs – Penn Township, Lancaster County



One tree had been removed, and a second was later removed to further improve sight distance – Clarion Borough, Clarion County



Warning sign for crosswalk located around the curve – East Hempfield, Lancaster County

Making Pennsylvania's Roads Safer

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the programs are intended to be perpetuated into the future through consistent re-evaluation and response. A plan that leaves something undone this year may become the foundation for next year's plan.

Higher cost recommendations have also been welcomed by participating communities. For example, Sandy Township in Clearfield County, a participant in the Local Safe Roads Communities Program, has begun acquiring right-of-way to cut back an embankment along one of the studied segments that was limiting visibility at the time of their follow-up call.

In Lehigh County, where four communities are participating in the Walkable Communities Program, those reports are being reviewed from a county-wide perspective to facilitate a larger, more congruent planning effort. Community leaders in the City of Allentown are

now working to organize a community effort to convert a portion of their studied corridor to two-way traffic with a center median. Implementation may be several years away, but the groundwork is now under way.

Follow-up contacts have revealed that community leaders are showing interest in, and engagement with, the recommendations made by LTAP's traffic safety engineers. From that perspective, the early follow-up interviews show the programs as successful. Beyond making signs and lines conform to federal and state regulations, though, is the need for increasing safety at the studied and improved locations. Continuing contacts with community officials over time will hopefully show that crash rates have declined, and crash severity, when they do occur, is diminished. Stay tuned. ♦

Upcoming Workshops

To Register:
PHONE: 1-800-FOR-LTAP (367-5827)
WEB SITE: www.ltap.state.pa.us

This represents some of our scheduled courses. Look for updates on the Web site.

March 16, 2010
Wayne County
Stormwater Management
8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
PPL Environmental Learning Center (Hawley)

March 16, 2010
York County
Work Zone Traffic Control
8:00 AM - Noon
Penn Township Public Works (Hanover)

March 17, 2010
Clearfield County
Roadside Safety Features
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Goshen Township

March 17, 2010
Bedford County
Unpaved & Gravel Roads
8:00 AM - Noon
Heartland Hall (Bedford)

March 17, 2010
Lancaster County
Roadway Safety Improvement Program
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Pequea Township

March 18, 2010
Potter County
Risk Management/Tort Liability
8:00 AM - Noon
Coudersport Maintenance Facility

March 18, 2010
Allegheny County
Roadside Vegetation Control
8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Monroeville Public Safety Training Center

March 23, 2010
Lebanon County
Roadside Safety Features
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
North Lebanon Township Building

March 25, 2010
Westmoreland County
Principles of Paving
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Penn Township (Harrison City)

March 30, 2010
Blair County
Traffic Signals
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Ramada Inn (Altoona)

March 30, 2010
Clearfield County
Stormwater Management
8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Bigler Township Municipal Building (Madera)

Congratulations to the following Roads Scholar recipients from Ferguson Township, Centre County:

- Steve Cox
- Van E. Holsinger
- Steven McDonald
- Larry Rider
- Robert Tussey
- Dickson Grenoble
- Chris Leidy
- David McMonagle
- Karl Stashak



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PennDOT Develops a Temporary Traffic Control Handbook

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approximately \$10 million annually to settle torts. Many of the torts filed do not get to court, because insurance companies will pay up to \$200,000 to avoid going to court, offering a clue as to the potential expense of a trial. Prior to the publication of PennDOT Publications 212 and 213, PennDOT published Publication 203 to provide guidance on work zone set-ups. Interestingly approximately 60% of the printed 203s were purchased by lawyers. Workshops are available to attorneys to learn how to sue public agencies. While these actions by lawyers may at first sound predatory, the reality is that poorly conducted work zone operations can cause crashes that result in injury or death, not only for motorists, but for work crew as well. The burden to conduct lane closure operations safely does lie with those closing the lane. The best defense against crashes, and the potential for legal liability, is conducting lane and shoulder closing operations carefully and in accordance with state and federal regulations.

The intent of the new *Temporary Traffic Control Handbook for Municipalities and Pocket Guide* is just that: to assist municipal officials with the planning and operation of safe, efficient lane and shoulder closures that meet the needs of their operations personnel and the traveling public. ♦