

WORK-ZONE SAFETY

By W.R. “Ron” Cauthan, PE



“Our nation’s highways see more than 42,000 people lose their lives in roadway-related accidents every year, and more than 1,000 of these fatalities occur in work-zone areas alone¹.” Since Florida highways seem to be constantly under construction, anyone passing through these work-zones can readily understand the danger. In an attempt to decrease the number of work-zone related deaths, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently authorized \$17 million dollars in grants to various organizations to provide safety training to those who work in work-zone areas to reduce injuries and deaths on our roadways.

The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) was awarded \$11.9 million of the \$17 million grant. Under the grant, three different areas of work-zone safety training are going to be covered.

The first area will focus on work-zone worker safety training. ATSSA will be reviewing current safety training criteria and techniques for the workers on the site. The second area will focus on developing work-zone safety guidelines. The current guidelines will be reviewed with the idea of improving work-zone safety requirements. The final area of focus will be to develop any new guidelines into safety training programs for local governments, transportation agencies and local engineering groups.

These courses will be offered in “Opportunity States” that have been identified by the Federal Highway Administration as having the largest number of work-zone related fatalities and injuries. This will provide the greatest chance to have those numbers reduced. According to the ATSSA website, the 15 “Opportunity States” are Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

ATSSA will be working with several different partners over the next four years to help administer and promote the grant. One of these will be J.M Morales and Associates. Many will recognize Mr. J.M. Morales as the instructor having provided your current Maintenance of Traffic Training. The ATSSA office in Kissimmee was the location where many of us took the Advanced Work Zone Traffic Control Refresher Course to renew our Maintenance of Traffic certification. While some states, such as Florida, require safety training such as that offered by ATSSA, there is currently no intention of making this additional training mandatory. It is my belief, however; that the additional safety measures and guidelines being developed will make it into the existing maintenance of traffic training and even into the FDOT Standard Indexes. ATSSA representatives have stated that since the additional training will be low cost, “people would have to be crazy not to take advantage of this training. They would have to be anti-safety not to take advantage.”

There will be more to come as these training efforts are formalized and new guidelines developed.

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¹Roads and Bridges Magazine, January 2007