

# BETTER ROADS SAFER ROADS



**BEING PREPARED  
WITH AN EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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Aiming to assist rural communities in the fight against opioid misuse, the Office of National Drug Control Policy has partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on a guide for employers.

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At least one person dies on Texas roadways every day and the numbers are increasing at an alarming rate.

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Register for free TxLTAP workshops and events occurring in 2020.

# WORK ZONE SAFETY AWARENESS ON TEXAS ROADWAYS

In recognition of National Work Zone Awareness Week which occurred April 20-24, 2020, TxDOT reminded motorists to make driving safely a priority when passing through the state's more than 3,200 active road construction and maintenance work zones. In 2019, more than 26,000 crashes occurred in work zones in Texas, resulting in 167 fatalities and 690 serious injuries.

Drivers and passengers account for the majority of those involved in fatal work zone crashes. In 2019, 138 motorists and passengers were killed in work zones. Five construction workers and 24 pedestrians and bicyclists also died. The leading causes of work zone crashes statewide – speeding and driver inattention – are entirely preventable.

## DRIVER SAFETY

Work zones present a different environment for drivers to navigate. Drivers are likely to encounter uneven pavement, narrow lanes, concrete barriers, slow-moving heavy equipment and vehicles that make sudden stops. Please keep the following tips in mind when driving through work zones:

- Slow down and always follow posted work zone speed limits. Remember, traffic fines double in work zones when workers are present and can cost up to \$2,000.
- Pay attention as workers and heavy equipment may only be a few feet from passing vehicles.

- Don't tailgate. Give yourself room to stop in a hurry. Rear-end collisions are the most common kind of work zone crashes.
- Stay alert, minimize distractions and put the phone away.
- Watch out for road crews. The only protective gear they wear is a vest, hard hat, and safety boots. Their bodies are no match for your vehicle.
- Allow extra time. Road construction slows things down. Count on it and plan for it.

## MORE WORK TO DO

TxDOT continues to work on increased safety measures and public outreach efforts to educate motorists about driving in work zones. We encourage everyone, from engineers and planners to drivers and pedestrians, to take responsibility for work zone safety. As part of this outreach, we remind drivers of the state's Move Over/Slow Down law. It requires drivers to move over a lane or reduce their speed to 20 mph below the posted speed limit when they see flashing blue or amber lights on a TxDOT vehicle, emergency vehicle, tow truck or utility vehicle stopped on the roadside or shoulder. Violation of this law can result in a fine of up to \$2,000.

# NSC POSTPONES DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH

The National Safety Council postponed observing Distracted Driving Awareness Month in April amidst the global coronavirus pandemic. For a decade, April has been earmarked to raise awareness of driver distraction, with NSC playing a founding role in the month's Congressional designation in 2010.

NSC will observe Distracted Driving Awareness Month at a later time this calendar year. It is just one of several events the Council has paused to ensure Americans are focusing on preventing and stemming the spread of COVID-19. NSC also postponed its 2020 Southern Safety Conference and Expo in New Orleans, scheduled for May 6-8 and has rescheduled it for July. The annual Green Cross for Safety awards gala in Chicago, scheduled for May 14, has been postponed until fall of 2020 and will be held in conjunction with the NSC Congress and Expo in Indianapolis. Updated information on all events will be available at [nsc.org/coronavirus](https://nsc.org/coronavirus).

"We are in unprecedented times, and employers look to NSC for safety guidance when it matters most," said Lorraine M. Martin, president and CEO of the National Safety Council. "We are intent on ensuring that the information they receive is in line with where their concerns need to be – and that is on taking care of their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic."

The National Safety Council urges all employers to follow guidance and directives from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and the U.S. Department of State to keep employees and their families safe.





# NAILING DOWN YOUR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

By Michael Martinet

A natural disaster may be the very worst thing that happens to a county and to its elected officials. A community or portions of it are ruined and everyone looks to the elected and appointed leadership to make things right, and make things right, right now.

No matter what has happened in the community before the disaster, the disaster resets the clock and at the very center of the storm are the elected officials. Few elected officials will make it through a disaster response and the following recovery unscathed.

*"Many local government agencies are not only under-prepared, their staffs do not even know how much they don't know."*

Every citizen wants a problem fixed now, and fixed first, with government support.

Often, perhaps in most cases, there is little or no training for elected officials on their expected roles following a disaster. Disasters come with an entirely different set of rules, and the time demands are relentless and unforgiving whether officials are prepared or not.

Because so many other issues occupy the everyday lives of elected officials, disaster preparedness, like saving for retirement, often gets short shrift. However, there are some questions that a savvy official can ask of their senior elected/appointed officials, the county administrator, the sheriff, the fire chief, the finance director and others. These questions — and the corresponding answers — can help educate county commissioners on the true status of how prepared the county is for disaster response and the often drawn-out recovery, which follows every disaster.

The secret to success in determining the true state of preparedness is to ask the right questions. If the board of county commissioners asks a senior public safety official if the county is prepared, the answer may easily be a dismissive "Yes, we're good to go." The alternative answer is "No, we need more funding to get ready."

Neither answer tells much about the real capabilities of the organization to respond to and recover from a disaster.

The following is a list of questions that elected officials can put to their senior leadership to really establish response and recovery potential.

A word of caution here. With 30 years of experience in emergency management, and 20 years of teaching disaster cost recovery, I find many local government agencies are not only under-prepared, their staffs do not even know how much they don't know.

Perhaps the best way to pose these questions would be to have a study session with the elected officials and the senior appointed officials. Any "deer in the headlights" look, which may follow a question, may be more telling than the spoken answers provided by staff.

One other note. Disaster response, while primarily the purview of fire, law, EMS and public works, also involves many other county departments. The larger and more devastating the disaster, the more departments that will be involved, particularly in the recovery phase of the disaster. The recovery period especially goes far beyond the law and fire services of any community.

These 20 questions are extracted from a much longer list, but when asked, they should give some answers as to the state of preparedness of your county. Many of these questions will just skim the surface, but they are a good way to start analyzing your preparedness.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS ASSESSMENT OF THE COUNTY

1. **Who handles the day-to-day duties associated with disaster preparedness and what percentage of their time is actually devoted to disaster preparedness?** Typically, emergency management (EM) is assigned to law enforcement or the fire service, although some counties may have it assigned to the chief administrator's office. If the EM function is located in the sheriff's office, the fire department

may not fully support the EM function and the reverse is true if the EM function is in the fire service. Turf matters. If located in the CAO's office, this isn't as much of a problem — and other non-public safety departments may be more supportive of the EM program. Often, particularly in smaller counties, an employee may have a 25 percent or 50 percent time allocation for the EM program. In fact, the actual amount of time they spend on EM may be much less.

2. **Does the county have a strategic plan for disaster preparedness?** If so, where is the county in regard to achieving the goals of the strategic plan? When was the strategic plan last revised? Don't be surprised at a "no" answer to this question, as very few counties have such a plan. However, EM is like every other important function of a county and should have a long-term strategic plan. It will pay huge benefits when a disaster strikes.
3. **Does the county have an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)? When was it last revised?** There should absolutely be an EOP, and it should be updated at least every three years. In many states, it may be a legal requirement to have a plan. **Does the county's Emergency Operations Plan contain:**
  - Disaster communications (both with the public and other government agencies.)
  - Access and Functional Needs
  - Animal Rescue (Animal Control)
  - Damage Assessment (Building and Safety; Roads and Bridges; Parks and Recreation; Finance)
  - Debris Management, Debris Monitoring (Public Works/ Environmental)
  - Disaster Cost Recovery (Finance and others)
  - Continuity of Operations (All departments)
  - Continuity of Government (Legal) (Where is the List of Succession?)

Continued on pages 5 - 6

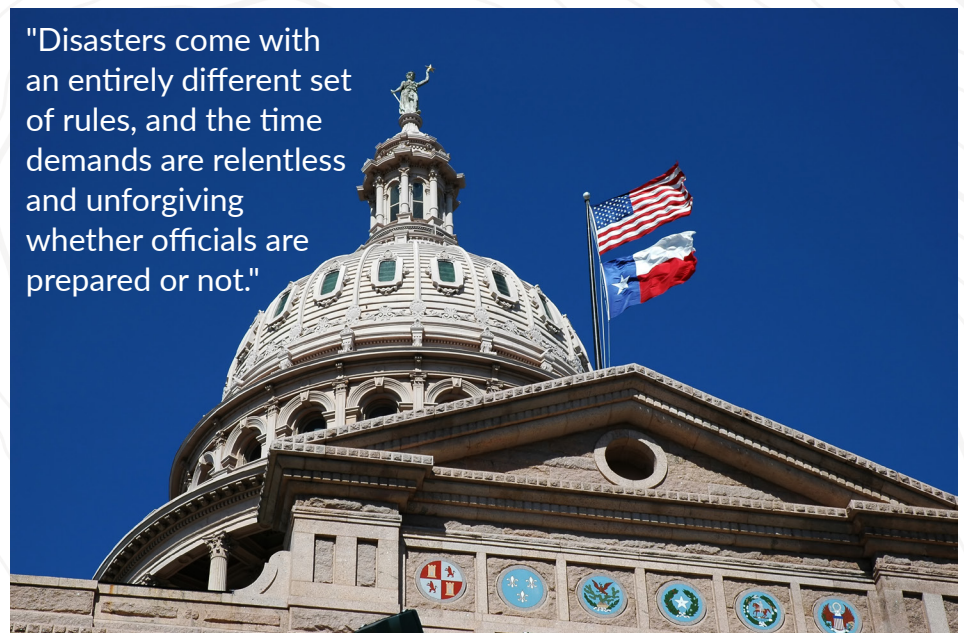
4. **Is the Emergency Operations Plan compliant with NFPA Standard 1600?** NFPA Standard 1600 or EMAP (the Emergency Management Accreditation Program) are objective national standards for measuring emergency management plans and preparedness.
5. **Does the county have a plan for disaster cost recovery? If so, when was it last revised?** Don't be surprised at a "No" answer to this question, as very few counties have such a plan. However, disaster cost recovery is like every other important function of a county and should have a working plan. It will pay huge benefits when a disaster strikes.
6. **Is the county part of a mutual aid agreement with neighboring jurisdictions? When was the mutual aid agreement last used? When was the agreement last revised?** Mutual Aid is important to all jurisdictions, and the smaller the jurisdiction, the more important it is. There can be problems with getting repaid for mutual aid if the plan hasn't been recently used and has not been regularly updated.
7. **When was the last emergency preparedness drill held that included activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)?** Compared to the day-to-day problems that counties have to deal with, holding an EOC exercise is easy to push off. The purpose of such exercises is to find weaknesses and shortfalls in plans BEFORE a disaster occurs. Regular EOC exercises, at least annually, should be required.
8. **When was the last time employees, other than police officers or firefighters, had emergency preparedness training?** As with question number 7, this kind of training is easily delayed or not done at all. One of the purposes of such training is to find the weaknesses of the plan and to build the confidence of staff to cope with an actual disaster. Agencies that frequently train and exercise usually do much better in real disasters than those that don't train and exercise.

*No matter what has happened in the community before the disaster, the disaster resets the clock and at the very center of the storm are the elected officials.*

9. **Other than for police and fire, what were the last three emergency preparedness classes held for employees, when were they held and how many employees attended each class?** Law and fire get relatively frequent training as compared with all other government employees. However, once the disaster crisis has passed, these other, often untrained, employees will be responsible for getting the recovery going. They need training too.
10. **Exclusive of the police and/or fire department budgets, how much do we have budgeted specifically for disaster preparedness activities?** This can be compared to paying for insurance. You don't want to have it, but you also can't afford to be without it when a disaster strikes.
11. **Is this county accredited by EMAP (Emergency Management Accreditation Process)?** (See the last bullet of question #4.) The county should use either EMAP or

NFPA Standard 1600 to ensure its EM program is comprehensive and healthy.

12. **Does the county have a Disaster Mitigation Plan in compliance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K)? When is the DMA2K Plan next due for revision?** While this sounds like an emergency management issue, it has a lot to do with county planning and land use policy, as well as Public Works and Roads and Bridges. Following a disaster, counties with a current and approved DMA2K plan may be able to get additional funding for mitigation projects from FEMA.
13. **Does the county have a volunteer CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), ham radio and/or animal rescue groups? If so, what are the numbers of people trained and the number of people currently active in those programs? When was the last CERT (and other) training program held and how many citizens participated?** Many of the better EM programs across the country incorporate volunteer programs. There is an added financial benefit when a disaster does occur, in so far as properly documented volunteer disaster response efforts can be claimed against the county's response and recovery costs.



14. **Are all county employees aware that they are Disaster Service Workers under State law, and specifically, where in our hiring process is this addressed?** In many states, all government employees are designated as Disaster Service Workers. All county employees should be aware of this responsibility and be prepared to respond as per the county's plan.

15. **Does the county have a Disaster Purchasing Policy and other necessary policies to maximize our ability to receive Federal disaster assistance?** When the county receives FEMA grants to pay for response and recovery costs, all work and expenses MUST comply with Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200, and the county's own purchasing policies. Failure to do so is the single greatest risk to having FEMA or the Department of Homeland Security's auditors take back ALL of the federal grant monies.

16. **Where are the names and phone numbers of the emergency preparedness officials with our local school district(s), local hospital(s), and other significant local partner agencies and companies, including local utilities? When was the list last updated?** The emergency contact lists for both county employees and outside agencies' employees get out of date rapidly and a consistent effort must be made to keep these lists up to date.

17. **What should we be doing to be better prepared for disaster response and recovery?** The county's own employees may have some very good ideas about how to make the county better prepared for a disaster, but administrative channels may block the free flow of information. The employees need to be a part of disaster preparedness and surveyed for suggestions.

18. **Overall on a scale of 1 to 10, how well prepared for disasters is the county?** This open-ended question may spur a greater awareness if asked of all employees, not just senior managers.

"The most important thing is to ensure that there is an ongoing discussion of emergency management and disaster recovery issues within the county, and consistently funded efforts to make program improvements."



19. **Has the county ever had an audit by an independent outside expert to evaluate the state of preparedness and recovery capabilities? Or does the Council exclusively rely on the self-assessments of staff regarding preparedness?** Employees, especially senior managers may have personal agendas that will color their responses and prevent a realistic assessment of the county's actual level of disaster preparedness for both response and recovery. Recovery capabilities are often more difficult to assess if the county has not had a disaster for a long time.

20. **Have any of the elected or senior officials ever attended an off-site disaster-related training program at the Federal Emergency Management Institute (often free), the University of Texas Extension or other nationally recognized emergency management training institute?** The federal government has many low-cost or no-cost training programs available for elected and appointed officials as well as rank and file employees. Also, request that your state counties' association feature emergency preparedness sessions at their meetings and conferences.

Once received, the answers to these questions may lead to an entirely new set of questions to be asked. Some answers may not paint a comfortable picture of the county's ability to respond to and recover from a disaster. But all of the answers should enable the elected and senior appointed leadership to make better long-term decisions about the county's ability to deal with day-to-day emergencies and those much rarer, but more deadly and costly disasters.

The most important thing is to ensure that there is an ongoing discussion of emergency management and disaster recovery issues within the county, and consistently funded efforts to make program improvements.

A sample Emergency Action Plan can be accessed in the [TxLTAP Library](#).

# TXLTAP HELPING COMMUNITIES MEET THEIR TRAINING NEEDS

## - TxLTAP -

In a state with 254 counties, municipal and county road agencies are responsible for maintaining a large portion of roads and bridges that carry vehicular traffic to meet the transportation needs of the state. With this level of Texas-sized transportation needs, there is a tremendous need for sound technical advice from experienced road, bridge/culvert, and traffic safety professionals.

The Texas Local Technical Assistance Program (TxLTAP), managed by The University of Texas Arlington's (UTA) [Division for Enterprise Development](#), focuses on preserving and enhancing the local road system by delivering quality training and technical assistance to local city/county road agencies in Texas. The training provided through TxLTAP helps to increase the performance of the transportation workers in Texas by ensuring they conduct their duties in a safe, efficient, environmentally sound, and cost-effective manner. TxLTAP also helps city and county agencies to maximize benefits from their often limited fiscal and staffing resources.

Through [training](#) geared to local government circumstances, customized [technical assistance](#), advice provided at [events](#), and a library of resources, TxLTAP provides relevant and impactful information focused on road and bridge/culvert maintenance, the use of traffic control devices, and other techniques to promote traffic safety.

TxLTAP staff recently sat down with Chad Smith, Public Works Street Superintendent for the City of Marble Falls, to discuss the training assistance that TxLTAP has provided to their staff.

### **Q: Please tell us what training event(s) The City of Marble Falls has requested from the TxLTAP program?**

A: Skid Steer, Front End Loader, Backhoe, Asphalt Distributor, Work Zone & Traffic Control/Qualified Flagger. Equipment training has been extremely beneficial as far as keeping our maintenance program going. The one that is the most beneficial is the Work Zone Qualified Flagger. It protects not only us, but it protects the public. As far as equipment goes, the Front End Loader, Backhoe, Skid Steer we all use. The Load and tie down class was extremely helpful a lot of my guys didn't realize how dangerous it is for the equipment to not to be tied down correctly. We brought in a

retired DPS trooper that was a qualified load and tie down license and weight guy. He was able to interact with the instructor and give feedback. We got a lot out of the class. The entire program fits our needs.

### **Q: How would describe the level of training received?**

A: It depends on the class. All of the classes are advanced and have plenty of good knowledge provided in them. I worked for TxDOT for twenty years and the same stuff that I'm doing, are in the classes that you are providing to get my workers caught up to where I don't have to train them as much. The training provided to the workers ensure they get the level of understanding they need to do their daily jobs safely.

### **Q: Did you employees find the instructor knowledgeable on the topic presented? What qualities did the instructor have that you feel most benefited your employees?**

A: Knowledge about specific topics explained on a level where all employees understand. The instructors train from a level of the employees experience and are able to explain the training material where they can understand it. It helps that the training is interactive and the employees can ask questions at any time. The hands-on training is huge.

### **Q: What was the quality of the training materials and do you**

*"Everyone [at TxLTAP] wants to help and go above and beyond, that to me is very refreshing."*





**know if any employees still use the materials as a reference tool?**

A: On a daily basis the training is exercised. The material is very informative. We've been very happy with the training materials. There hasn't been anything that has not been covered.

**Q: How has that training changed your operations? A more efficient workforce? Brought an area into compliance with regulations/best practices? Reduced injuries? Reduced employee turnover? Increased safety awareness?**

A: Five years ago I wanted to set a goal for an elite status in four years' time. I realized quickly that not one guy that I have in my department had any level of training. No safety instructions, no equipment safety, no walk around training, it was disheartening. However, I knew that it could be accomplished. I was lucky enough to find TxLTAP on the web. I contacted them and we got started. We loaded up on all the classes possible that we could take. Taking these classes and getting the different interactions as well as different perspectives from different instructors each of them bring a different level of leadership. The training is very informative, and very appreciated. Getting to go out and properly set up the traffic control. Channelizing the equipment keeps the traveling public as well as our workforce safe in these work zones. There was no experience here prior to the training. Things we learned and improved were the use of: safety lights on vehicles, hard hats, vest, and other personnel protection equipment. The traffic control training has been utilized in our daily work. Safety has been key for us. TxDOT maintains Highway 281 that runs through the center of the city. When I worked for TxDOT in 1992 the traffic count was 12,000 vehicles, when I left them in 2013 we were right at 60,000 vehicles. It has grown significantly. We work with TxDOT to ensure the roads are safe for the travelling public.

**Q: Are there any other services you have used from TxLTAP such as resources from the website, checked out equipment, checked out DVD's on safety, have employees watch our video's on YouTube?**

A: No, we have not used other resources at this time. Training with an instructor is more beneficial for us to interact and ask questions if needed.

**Q: When you have called or visited with TxLTAP staff, what was your experience?**

A: Everyone wants to help and go above and beyond, that to me is very refreshing. A lot of other places say "we will get back to you". I enjoy talking with the person that is handling the courses that I'm seeking. The program has always made the effort to get an instructor schedule to fit our needs.

**Q: As you continue to use TxLTAP Services, please tell us what**

*Continued on page 9*

*"Asphalt Distributor was MEGA-HUGE for us. We purchased equipment last year and with the proper training we can start seal coating our own roads, spot sealing."*



**services would you most likely use?**

- » Heavy equipment operator training
- » Safety training
- » Work Zone training
- » Infrastructure management training
- » Personnel management/leadership training
- » Technical Assistant for roadways, drainage, signage, right-of-way issues
- » Technical Assistant for Workforce Development (employee career development)
- » Safety Library DVD's
- » Equipment Library
- » YouTube training videos
- » TxLTAP Website for information and resource links
- » Other:

A: Work Zone Training and Qualified Flagger, we re-certified our

*"The instructors train from a level of the employees experience and are able to explain the training material where they can understand it. It helps that the training is interactive and the employees can ask questions at any time. The hands-on training is huge."*



employees to ensure they were knowledgeable and up to date. Asphalt Distributor was MEGA-HUGE for us. We purchased equipment last year and with the proper training we can start seal coating our own roads, spot sealing. Many small surrounding cities depend on the county to keep up their roads, mostly due to lack of training. We did prove that we could seal coat roads manually before deciding that we needed better equipment. We are fortunate enough to have equipment training and knowledge to do city projects. The city projects went from two blocks to five miles last year, and we plan to do another seven miles this year.

**Q: Please tell us the top two things that have made a difference in your municipality from the training or services TxLTAP has provided to you?**

A: We have a main road that goes straight to the cemetery in Marble Falls. Most of it was dilapidated. Visitors would have to take alternate routes to and from the cemetery for the families. We reconstructed that road, there was a six-month plan to do full reconstruction from top to bottom. The road was eighteen-foot wide, no curb and gutter. It was a dirt road with very little asphalt on it. Now the road is twenty-seven feet wide, curb and gutter, drainage, and a full seal coat. We were able to do this in less than six months, as well as under budget. All employees with the proper training were a part of this. They were able to safely use all the equipment, due to recent training from TxLTAP. We have gone from little jobs to big jobs and looking for more. It's motivating and rewarding to see the outcome of all the hard work that we have done.

**Q: What else can TxLTAP do to help the City of Marble Falls in training or services?**

A: The training that the program has provided is well-rounded, and exactly what we needed. As a street department it is important that our citizens see the benefits of our daily work. For us to achieve good and safe roads assists in the sale of property in the City. The population has started to grow, and we have been able to give back by keeping the city roads in better condition. I want to say thank you to TxLTAP. It has built morale and a team that we didn't have before. We all enjoy coming to work knowing exactly what we are doing.

If your agency is interested in receiving training or technical expertise through TxLTAP, please contact TxLTAP staff at 817-272-9678 or [txltap@uta.edu](mailto:txltap@uta.edu).



## SAFETY CERTIFICATION FOR TRANSPORTATION PROJECT PROFESSIONALS™

Our vision is to ensure the safety and well-being of construction workers, motorists, truck drivers, pedestrians and their families by making transportation projects safer.

# TRANSPORTATION PROJECT SAFETY CERTIFICATION LEADERS PROVIDE BOOST WITH NEW WEBSITE

“The Safety Certification for Transportation Project Professionals program allows an individual to demonstrate their personal commitment to safety,” says Superior Construction Safety Director Bryan Stone. “The knowledge gained helps identify hazards and solutions to mitigate risks, which elevates safety for an individual and the whole project team.”

Adds Lane Construction Safety Training Manager Alissa Sternagle, “I am safety certified. I have put my safety training knowledge to the test to ensure that the safety of me and my team is the top priority.”

Stone and Sternagle are among the leaders featured on a redesigned website - [puttingsafetyfirst.org](http://puttingsafetyfirst.org) - that aims to build greater awareness and participation in the Safety Certification for Transportation Project Professionals™ (SCTPP) program, the industry’s only internationally accredited safety credential.

Launched in late 2016 by top transportation construction, labor, trucking and insurance executives and public agency officials via the American Road & Transportation Builders Association’s (ARTBA) Foundation, the SCTPP’s mission is clear: significantly reduce—or ideally eliminate—the 700 motorist and worker fatalities and nearly 50,000 injuries that occur annually in and around U.S. transportation project sites.

It is designed to bring thousands more “eyes” to the task of identifying and mitigating potential hazards for workers and motorists commonly found in transportation work zones—skills identified through the certification.

Beyond testimonials highlighting how the SCTPP is positively impacting corporate safety culture, “[Putting Safety First](#)” features:

- A quick test to determine eligibility;
- Step-by-step instructions for getting certified;
- Shareable “How to Videos;”
- Downloadable brochures, manuals and handbooks; and
- A direct connection to Online Learning Center courses—a valuable resource for certification exam preparation.

Nearly 500 professionals from 96 companies representing 38 states and the District of Columbia have earned the prestigious credential, which is valid for three years. The program earned accreditation from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) in May 2018.

The certification exam contains up to 120 multiple-choice questions that test knowledge in: assessing project risks; creating project safety plans; implementing and conducting ongoing evaluation of a site-specific operational safety plan; and conducting incident investigations.

*The SCTPP program is a signature initiative of the [ARTBA Transportation Development Foundation](#), a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt entity established in 1985 to “promote research, education and public awareness” about the impacts of transportation investment. The Foundation supports an array of initiatives, including educational scholarships, awards, management and education programs, roadway work zone safety training, special economic research and reports and an exhibition on transportation at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.*

# CRASH TREES:

## A USEFUL (AND NOW AUTOMATED) TOOL FOR SYSTEMIC SAFETY

By: Karen Scurry, FHWA Office of Safety, and Frank Gross, VHB



Diagram 1. Systemic Approach to Safety Management

The systemic approach to safety management seeks to identify and treat locations with the greatest potential for safety improvement based on site-specific geometric and operational attributes known to increase crash risk. Diagram 1 illustrates the six-step systemic approach, detailed in FHWA's [Systemic Safety Project Selection Tool](#).

The systemic approach starts with identifying focus crash types, focus facility types, and risk factors. Focus crash types typically represent the greatest number of severe crashes across the roadway network of interest and provide the greatest potential to reduce fatalities and serious injuries. Emphasis areas from State Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSP), County Road Safety Plans (CRSP), and Local Road Safety Plans (LRSP) are good places to start to identify focus crash types. Emphasis areas may include high-level crash categories (focus crash types) such as roadway departure, intersections, pedestrians, impaired driving, or speeding. From here, an analyst might define the focus crash type as "fatal and serious injury roadway departure crashes." Another focus crash type might include fatal and serious injury pedestrian crashes. Once an agency identifies focus crash types, there is a need to further identify focus facility types and risk factors.

Focus facility types are roadways on which the focus crash type most frequently occurs. For instance, fatal and serious injury roadway departure crashes may occur most frequently on rural, two-lane undivided roads. Risk factors are characteristics associated with locations where targeted crash types occurred. For example, risk factors for fatal and serious injury roadway departure crashes on rural, two-lane undivided roads may include presence of horizontal curves, narrow pavement width, and steep roadside slopes.

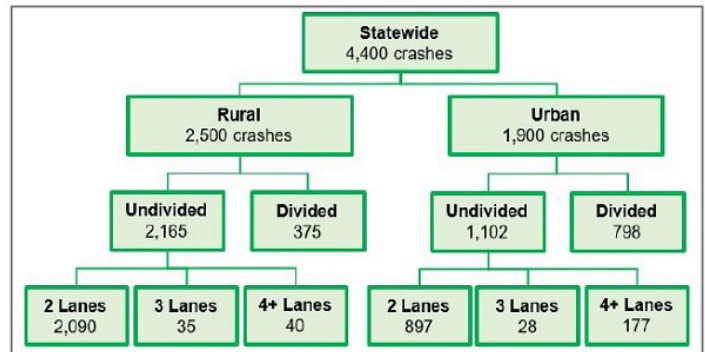


Diagram 2. Example of Crash Tree for Statewide Fatal & Serious Injury Roadway Departure Crashes

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	state/date		Most Harmful Event	Ownership	Number of Lanes	Median Type
1	1/1/2017	Run-off-road left, Other fixed object	County	2	Undivided	
2	1/1/2017	Run-off-road left, Tree	County	2	Undivided	
3	1/1/2017	Run-off-road right, Tree	County	2	Undivided	
4	1/1/2017	Run-off-road left, Tree	County	2	Undivided	
5	1/1/2017	Run-off-road left, Other fixed object	County	2	Undivided	
6	1/1/2017	Head-on	County	2	Undivided	
7	1/1/2017	Run-off-road right, Rollover	County	2	Undivided	
8	1/1/2017	Run-off-road left, Rollover	State	2	Undivided	
9	1/1/2017	Head-on	State	2	Undivided	
10	1/1/2017	Head-on	State	2	Undivided	
11	1/1/2017	Run-off-road right, Tree	County	2	Undivided	
12	1/1/2017	Run-off-road right, Other fixed object	County	2	Undivided	
13	1/1/2017	Run-off-road right, Rollover	County	2	Undivided	
14	1/1/2017	Run-off-road right, Tree	County	2	Undivided	
15	1/1/2017	Run-off-road right, Tree	County	2	Undivided	
16	1/1/2017	Run-off-road right, Tree	County	2	Undivided	

Diagram 3. Data Tab from the Crash Tree Tool

Crash trees are a useful tool to help identify focus facility types and potential risk factors for further analysis. A crash tree is a visual representation of crashes, where each branch represents a variable of interest. Diagram 2 is an example crash tree for statewide fatal and serious injury roadway departure crashes. The variables of interest are area type (rural or urban), median type (undivided or divided), and number of lanes (2, 3, or 4+).

Typically, focus facility type represents the greatest number of focus crashes. In the example crash tree provided above, the crash tree indicates that of the 4,400 statewide fatal and serious injury roadway departure crashes, 48 percent occurred on rural, two-lane undivided roads, which could be selected as the focus facility type.

From a systemic perspective, this helps narrow the area of interest and number of potential miles to treat while still including a large number of crashes. Analysts might also consider exposure (i.e., the number of miles represented by each potential facility type) to detect over-representation. For example, the crash tree shows that nearly 50 percent of fatal and serious injury roadway departure crashes occurred on rural, two-lane undivided roads. If rural, two-lane undivided roads represent 40 percent of the network, then this suggests a good opportunity to impact safety.

Crash trees should start with a trunk and branch out into subsets of crashes. Each variable of interest becomes a new branch and each branch should support subsequent branches. Specifically, core branches should represent those variables with fewer categories. It is useful to start with binary variables, such as area type (rural or urban) or crash location (intersection or non-intersection), before branching into variables with several categories such as posted speed limit or number of lanes.

Branches may include roadway-, traffic-, or crash-related variables. It is useful to develop crash trees with focus facility types or risk factors in mind. Thinking about the focus crash type (e.g., fatal and serious injury roadway departure crashes) and focus facility type (e.g., rural, two-lane undivided roads), potential risk factors might include surface type, lane width, shoulder width and type, roadway alignment, surface condition, light condition, and roadside features. It may be useful to develop crash trees to explore these potential risk factors.

Traditionally, developing crash trees includes using pivot tables to summarize crashes by combinations of variables, manually transcribing results to text boxes, and connecting the boxes with connector lines. This time-intensive process presented an opportunity for automation.

In response, FHWA developed the Crash Tree tool to automate creating crash tree diagrams. The Crash Tree tool is a spreadsheet application that allows users to import crash data, select variables of interest, and generate crash trees. The images provided show screenshots of the data, input, and output tabs. Diagram 3 allows users to import the data set of interest. The variables can be text or numeric values, but each row should represent an individual crash and each column a potential variable of interest.

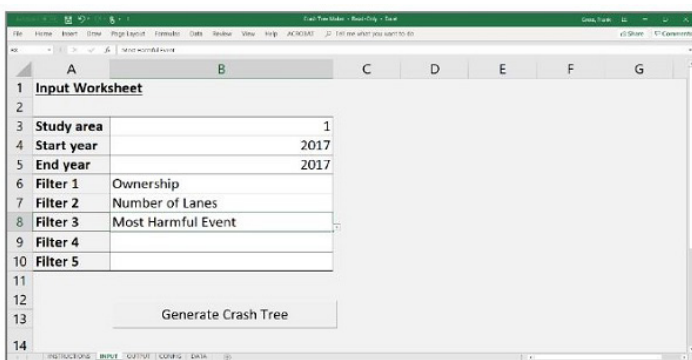


Diagram 4. Input Tab from the Crash Tree Tool

The input tab shown in Diagram 4 allows users to define the study area and study period and filter variables of interest from dropdown menus. The study area field is useful for generating crash trees for specific regions, counties, or local agencies within a larger (e.g., statewide) data set. Start and end years are useful for defining a narrow study period when the data set includes several years of data. Filters represent branches of the crash tree, where filter 1 is the first branch, followed by filter 2, filter 3, and so forth. After specifying parameters for the crash tree, users can click Generate Crash Tree and view results on the output tab.

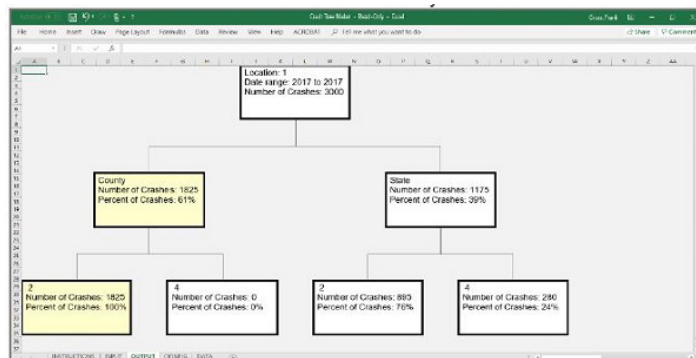


Diagram 5. Output tab from the Crash Tree tool.

The output tab shown in Diagram 5 shows the crash tree diagram. Note this crash tree only shows two variables of interest (ownership and number of lanes). If filter 3 (most harmful event) was included, as shown in the screenshot on the previous page, the crash tree output would include one more row of branches with a summary of crashes by most harmful event.

Crash tree diagrams support the systemic safety analysis process to help you identify and select facility types where focus crash types most frequently occur and explore potential risk factors. The [Crash Tree tool](#), user guide, and training video are available for free from the [National Center for Rural Road Safety](#).



For training or technical assistance on the systemic safety analysis process, including the Crash Tree tool, contact Karen Scurry or Jerry Roche from the FHWA Office of Safety at [Karen.scurry@dot.gov](mailto:Karen.scurry@dot.gov) or [jerry.roche@dot.gov](mailto:jerry.roche@dot.gov).

Article reprinted from the Federal Highway Administration's Winter 2020 issue of *Safety Compass*.

# A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO CRISIS COMMUNICATION

By Charles Arena, American Public Works Association



Communities all over the country are at risk of the types of crises which can suspend daily life.

"We have to remember that reputations are won or lost in a crisis." – American Express CEO Ken Chenault

The above quote is short—only 13 words— but the truth of those words extends far beyond the page. When a crisis hits, whether it comes in the form of a municipal data breach, water main burst, monster snowstorm, or highway collapse, it is up to public works to ensure the challenges are being addressed quickly, and normalcy and services are restored to the affected community. Communication is fundamental in successfully resolving a crisis.

One of the core responsibilities of a communications officer is to help organizations and their leaders make decisions and communicate immediately and clearly when something goes wrong. As public works professionals are familiar with the technical and operational processes that go into preparing for and executing a plan during a crisis, it is also advisable to have, and practice, a crisis communications plan long before a crisis occurs. If you find yourself in the middle of a crisis with no communications plan

in place, the challenges can be harder to overcome, and the anxiety in the community can be increased. And, if communication is not a fundamental part of resolving the crisis, there could be substantial long-term consequences.

A crisis can be analyzed as any situation that runs the risk of escalating in intensity, forcing your department to be under close media or government scrutiny, interfering with normal operations, jeopardizing positive public image, or damaging financial stability. If ignored or handled poorly, a crisis can easily grow to cause operational and reputational harm long past the crisis at hand. At some point, many organizations may encounter an event that risks reputational damage.

The timeliness and transparency of its response is the key to an organization surviving a crisis with its reputation, operations, and financial position intact. Organizations that suffer the same crisis may experience significantly different reactions and fallout based on the timeliness and quality of their individual responses. In some crises, if you wait too long, the damage may be irreparable. By allowing time to go by without addressing or taking control of the narrative of the crisis, outside entities will then influence the way it is discussed and shown to the

media and public. Like a crisis, once a narrative is lost, it can be very difficult to regain control.

The single largest contributor to reputational and other harm resulting from a crisis is always the potential of the perception of indifference, especially if there are victims. City, federal government, and local officials are often forgiven when bad things happen, but this sentiment can flip instantaneously if the organization responsible for and going through the crisis appears to not care about, or even acknowledge the affected people or community. This also applies to public works, and as such means it is so important to clearly communicate with the media and public about the crisis itself and the actions being taken to assist current victims and prevent additional ones.

First, before a crisis even occurs, it is extremely important to have a designated spokesperson for your organization. Then, should a crisis arise, the spokesperson must be provided all the facts: What led to the crisis? Who is impacted? What is being done to resolve it? What is the estimated time for resolution? Be certain to identify and document all the events that contributed to the crisis and decide how the information will be presented, and most importantly, stick to the facts.

If you belong to a larger organization, you may already have a Public Information/ Affairs Officer (PIO/ PAO) who would handle this role, but for many smaller organizations that do not, it could be the Public Works Director, a local elected official, law enforcement, or a person on the front line of the crisis who conveys the necessary information. Whomever it is, using one voice to channel the message will not only make the message clearer, but it will help control the information and hopefully prevent communication errors that can result from too many spokespeople.

Clarity and accuracy are key. Even if you are handling the technical and operational aspects of the crisis to the best of your department's ability, trust will only be earned by communicating the facts to the media and community. If you have already developed a crisis communications plan and have a designated spokesperson and process for gathering the relevant facts, it is also key to have relationships with other first responders in the community and the local media, before a crisis ever occurs.

Establishing a relationship with other local first responder organizations and the media goes a long way in helping to avoid the issue of credibility before it arises. In a time of crisis these partners, and the public, will be much more trusting of an organization that they already know goes above and beyond ensuring transparency and safety.

Now, when the crisis unexpectedly does hit, it is much easier for the designated spokesperson to gather all the information, contact the proper outside entities, and begin working in conjunction with their colleagues toward returning to normalcy. To return to normalcy, your crisis communications plan must entail continual updates to the media and public; just because you spoke to them once does not mean you are absolved from continuing to update them on the process and new developments. As operations move toward returning to normalcy, it is also good to inform the media and public of what will be done differently to prevent this type of crisis or mitigate the damage should a similar event ever happen again. This

last part is crucial because it will also aid you in your transparency efforts and build and maintain trust with the media and public. One can see how this is a cyclical process, which could have positive effects if handled correctly.

The biggest takeaway is to always be prepared; you never know when a crisis will strike and what you will have to do in order to solve it and return to normalcy. It's always important to test your crisis communications process to ensure that it will indeed hold up in a crisis, just as you do in running practice drills for emergency preparedness. With practice, your crisis communications plan will provide you with a safe, solid structure to follow and guide you through any event.

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*Article reprinted from the American Public Works Association's Reporter March 2020 issue.*

# TEXAS TRANSPORTATION HALL OF HONOR 2020 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Texas Transportation Hall of Honor board is accepting nominations for 2020 inductees until July 31, 2020.

Texas is recognized as having one of the finest multimodal transportation systems in the world. The existence of this system has been a key aspect of the economic development of the state and in providing Texans with a high quality of life. The creation and operation of the Texas transportation system are the result of unusual vision and leadership provided by a relatively small number of exceptional individuals.

Each individual selected for the Hall of Honor is recognized at an induction ceremony and with a plaque on permanent display in the Hall of Honor located at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute Headquarters Building at The Texas A&M University System's RELLIS Campus in Bryan, Texas.

The Hall of Honor, established in 2000, provides the opportunity to recognize the state's true transportation leaders. A five-member board comprised of senior transportation professionals with knowledge of the historical development of the transportation system in Texas oversees the Hall of Honor.

Nominate someone for this honor.

<https://tti.tamu.edu/about/hall-of-honor/call-for-nominations/>

# ABSENT TRAFFIC JAMS, MANY DRIVERS GETTING MORE RECKLESS: TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMUNITY URGES SAFER DRIVING DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Emptier streets may be encouraging some drivers to flaunt traffic safety laws, including speed limits. Despite there being far fewer vehicles on the road due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, state highway safety officials across the country are seeing a severe spike in speeding. Many states have reported alarming speed increases, with some noting a significant surge in vehicles clocked at 100 mph or more.

Being a safe driver should always be a priority, but during the coronavirus pandemic, traffic safety experts at the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) say it is more important than ever. “While COVID-19 is clearly our national priority, our traffic safety laws cannot be ignored,” said GHSA Executive Director Jonathan Adkins. “Law enforcement officials have the same mission as health care providers — to save lives. If you must drive, buckle up, follow the posted speed limit and look out for pedestrians and bicyclists. Emergency rooms in many areas of the country are at capacity, and the last thing they need is additional strain from traffic crash victims.”

During the months of March and April, pedestrian and bicycle traffic are reported to have increased exponentially, while motor vehicle traffic is down. Adkins noted that GHSA is encouraged to see so many communities across the country making roadways more accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists. To keep roads safe for everyone, traffic safety officials nationwide are pleading with motorists to slow down and respect traffic safety laws.

“During the past two months, Americans nationwide have shown that we are all willing to do the right thing to protect ourselves and each other,” said Pam Shadel Fischer, GHSA’s Senior Director of External Engagement and Special Projects. “We must maintain that same sense of urgency when it comes to the road. Drivers need to respect the law and look out for other road users, so that we can prevent the needless loss of life now and moving forward.”

A 2019 report on speeding by GHSA, “[Speeding Away from Zero: Rethinking a Forgotten Traffic Safety Challenge](#),” highlights excessive vehicle speed as a persistent factor in nearly one-third of all motor vehicle-related fatalities, while a [2020 GHSA report on pedestrian fatalities](#), published in February, finds that pedestrians now account for 17% of all traffic-related fatalities.

Despite the fact that a significant percentage of all crashes are speeding-related, speeding is not given enough attention as a traffic safety issue and is deemed culturally acceptable by the motoring public. To combat this problem, GHSA, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc. (NRSF) have partnered to provide up to \$200,000 in grant funding to a community to develop, implement and evaluate a [speed management pilot program](#). The organizations are looking for a pilot program that can be scaled nationally and plan to announce the grant winner in May.

## PREVENTING OPIOID MISUSE: NEW GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS IN RURAL AREAS

Aiming to assist rural communities in the fight against opioid misuse, the [Office of National Drug Control Policy](#) has partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on a [guide](#) for employers.

The guide cites a [2017 survey](#) commissioned by the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Farmers Union that found 74% of farmers and farm workers have been directly affected by the opioid crisis. Further, 77% of the respondents said it’s easy to obtain “a large amount” of opioids or other painkillers in their community without a prescription.

“Workplace safety is the highest priority for employers,” the guide states. “Workers under the influence can jeopardize that commitment, presenting danger to themselves and others. Employers must maintain adequate staff to operate a business and may not have the luxury of giving struggling personnel time to fully recover from a substance misuse disorder.”

Noting that workers in recovery from a substance misuse disorder warrant an “opportunity to show that he or she can be accountable and productive in the workplace and maintain his or her sobriety,”

the guide suggests that employers consider increasing employment opportunities among that worker segment by:

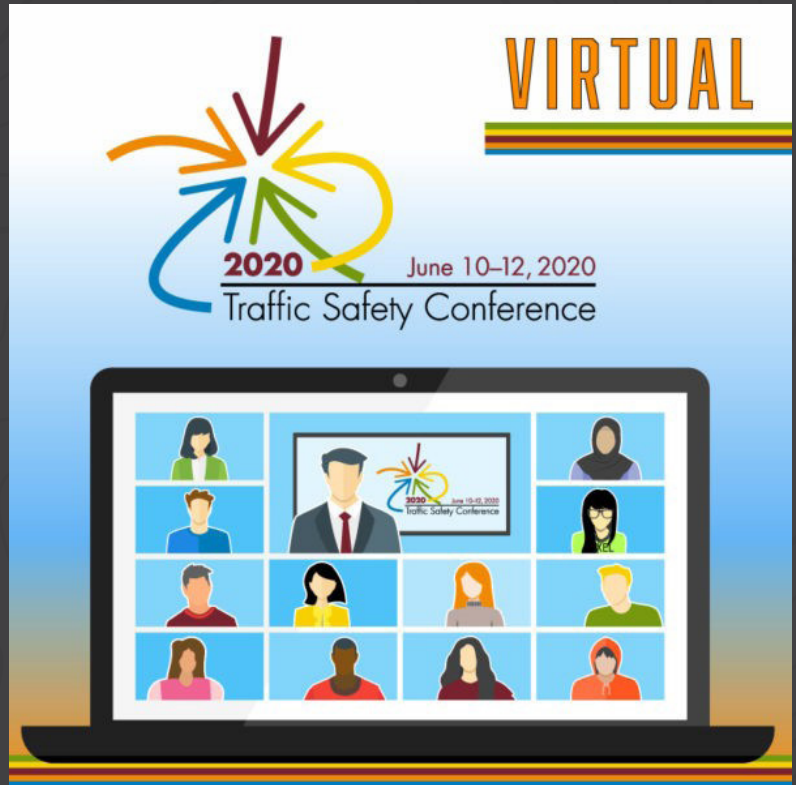
- Investing in training to help recognize the signs and symptoms of substance misuse disorders, which often vary by individual
- Promoting recovery-friendly workplace initiatives that encourage healthy lifestyles
- Supporting second-chance initiatives
- Developing a fuller understanding of the specifics of addiction recovery
- Partnering with stakeholders to develop career development, peer support and mentoring, and other “work ready” programs

“The crisis of addiction has impacted thousands of families across rural America and has taken a monumental toll on countless communities,” Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said in a Jan. 31 press release. “USDA continues to partner with community leaders to address this epidemic and encourage individuals to utilize the action steps and recommended practices included in the Rural Community Action Guide.”





# 2020 TEXAS TRAFFIC SAFETY VIRTUAL CONFERENCE



The 2020 Texas Traffic Safety Conference originally scheduled for June 10-12 in College Station, Texas will now be offered as an online conference. Due to COVID-19, the in-person event has been canceled with hopes to resume the in-person conference in the Summer of 2021.

Join the Texas A&M Transportation Institute and other statewide safety professionals for the 2020 Texas Traffic Safety Virtual Conference. This is the first time that the annual traffic safety conference will be offered online. Though we might be restricted to an online environment due to COVID-19, the pandemic won't keep statewide safety professionals from meeting together to address traffic safety in Texas. There are several silver linings associated with going virtual with the conference:

1. Recorded sessions. Attendees won't have to choose between concurrent sessions. All sessions will be available immediately after each session and can be viewed or re-viewed at a later date via permalinks on the World Wide Web.
2. Online interaction. Interaction with fellow attendees will be available in real-time, through moderated chat Q&A exchanges and smaller online meetings.

3. No travel costs. Travel dollars can be repurposed to other initiatives. This year's conference is cost effective and offered at a reduced rate of \$50 (a flat fee for attendance).
4. No suitcase packing or wardrobe requirements. Attendees can participate in the conference from the comfort of their own home or office.

Sessions will focus on high priority safety issues and innovative solutions to #EndTheStreak of daily fatal crashes in Texas. Ways to support Texas' new ambitious goal of zero deaths per year on Texas roads will also be discussed. The agenda, interactive activities, and discussions will target engineering, enforcement, education and outreach, emergency responders, and community/stakeholder engagement. Information and strategies relevant to employers will also be highlighted.

For more information on the 2020 Texas Safety Virtual Conference, please visit <https://groups.tti.tamu.edu/cts/2020-traffic-safety-conference/> or contact Christie Havemann at (979) 317-2513 or [c-havemann@tti.tamu.edu](mailto:c-havemann@tti.tamu.edu).



# TEXAS STRATEGIC HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN - DOING OUR PART TO REDUCE FATALITIES ON TEXAS ROADWAYS

At least one person dies on Texas roadways every day and the numbers are increasing at an alarming rate. Motor vehicle fatalities are the number one cause of death for children under the age of 14 – a human and economic tragedy for our state. The Texas Department of Transportation, Department of Public Safety, and a host of other agencies continue to seek your help in developing a strategic highway safety plan (SHSP) to drive down the numbers.

The current Texas SHSP focuses on seven emphasis areas that show the greatest promise of success in reducing fatalities in the least amount of time - Distracted Driving, Intersection Safety, Pedestrian Safety, Impaired Driving, Older Road Users, Roadway and Lane Departures, and Speeding. The Traffic Safety Division of the Texas Department of Transportation, working in conjunction with the Center for Transportation Safety at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, led this strategic highway safety planning process. Hundreds of safety stakeholders from across the State, representing local, regional and state agencies, law enforcement, industry and advocates, engineers, clinicians, and educators actively participated in the process.

The recently redesigned [Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#) website is a great resource to countermeasures and strategies to help reduce serious injuries and fatalities caused by traffic crashes. The website also provides stakeholders with an opportunity to [share information](#) on existing safety projects and programs within Texas as part of the State's Strategic Highway Safety Planning efforts. The collected information will be used to identify a base level of safety activity, identify gaps in the State's current efforts and help safety professionals to determine what other efforts might be needed.

Because the SHSP must be updated every five years, you are invited to join one of the emphasis area teams and help TxDOT to identify the most effective and efficient strategies and actions to reduce fatalities and injuries on Texas roads. Learn more about the Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan and how you can participate by visiting <https://www.texasshsp.com/>.

For more information on upcoming events and workshops, visit [txltap.org](http://txltap.org)

Call the TxLTAP office at 817-272-9678 or email us at [txltap@uta.edu](mailto:txltap@uta.edu) to schedule an event or workshop near you.

## GRAVEL ROADS ACADEMY

Improve upon current knowledge related to gravel road maintenance best practices. Learn how to get more mileage out of your gravel roads budget with the latest tools, techniques, and know-how from road maintenance experts.

## HEAVY EQUIPMENT RODEO

Heavy equipment operators will be given a chance to learn and practice new skills while stressing safety and excellence. Operators will use maintainers, backhoes, dump trucks, loaders, and more to steer through a series of exercises designed to test their abilities.

## HEAVY EQUIPMENT FOR WILDFIRES

Heavy Equipment Operators are sometimes called out to assist fire fighters in wildland fire situations. Learn methods of attacking a fire, techniques of diminishing a fire with a dozer and grader, and dangerous situations to avoid.

## SNOW AND ICE TECHNIQUES

Snow and ice control is a complex process. This workshop will cover personal and operational safety, plowing techniques, salt and abrasive application, and decision making based on the forecast and actual in storm conditions.



# TXLTAP EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

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TXLTAP IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE SOME OF THE MOST EXPERIENCED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE TRANSPORTATION PROFESSIONALS ON STAFF.

This staff includes former maintenance managers, heavy equipment operators, road crew chiefs, civil and transportation engineers, inspectors, and the public works directors who all worked on the state's road system and in a nutshell "have been there, done that." Now Texas' local roadway agencies can directly benefit from their street smarts.

While training and information sharing at conferences or through a newsletter can do a lot of good, TxLTAP recognizes sometimes there is just nothing like rolling up your sleeves, experiencing the problem first hand and then offering a meaningful solution. That's why in addition to hosting classes and publishing Better Roads, Safer Roads, our program offers local roadway agencies an opportunity to consult directly with a TxLTAP subject matter expert to specifically address your organization's unique issue. And like all resources TxLTAP offers, there is no charge to receive our help or expertise.

Do you need information on proper method for repairing your lingering road problem? Would it help if someone came out to watch your road crew perform a repair and offer suggestions on how to save time and money in the future? Could you use the help of a traffic engineer who could assess a problematic intersection? Would it be a benefit to you if a subject matter expert came to ride the roads and developed a training presentation specific to your needs?

Take advantage of our technical assistance service!

Call 817-272-9678 or email us at [txltap@uta.edu](mailto:txltap@uta.edu). We're ready to help!



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