



August 3, 2004

TO: Tom Swafford, State Utility Engineer
Mail Stop: 47338

FROM: Chris Christopher/360-705-7850
Kevin J. Dayton/360-705-7821

SUBJECT: Utility Company Work Zone Compliance

As co-chairs of the Work Zone Safety Task Force (WZSTF), we would like to share our concern regarding utility contractors who do not comply with work zone standards. All traffic control measures applied in work zones within WSDOT right of way must comply with standards. Some of the compliance issues include:

- Improper signing as follows:
 - Non-spec reflective sheeting and poor condition.
 - Wrong size, spacing, and improper ballast.
 - Signs are not removed when not in use (even at lunchtime).
 - Signs are not set up in the proper sequence.
- Appropriate/approved traffic control is not being used.
- Safety hazards such as parked equipment, stockpiled materials, and unprotected excavations are present.
- No provisions for pedestrians or bikes.
- Improper work hours that result in unacceptable traffic delays.

Labor and Industries has also expressed concern that many utility work zones do not use proper traffic control, especially when flaggers are used.

The task force has discussed these compliance issues and offers the following recommendations to improve work zone conditions.

- At the region level, consider the use of a dedicated utility inspector to ensure compliance to construction requirements as well as work zone requirements. Consider making provisions to allow cost recovery from utility companies to pay for this position.
- Compliance starts with ensuring that utility permits and franchise documents contain specific work zone requirements based on the work and traffic impacts involved. Utilities should submit traffic control plans for approval prior to starting work.

- WSDOT utility inspectors and maintenance personnel who oversee utility work should be trained in traffic control, probably as a Traffic Control Supervisor (TCS) or have Maintenance Traffic Control Operations Training (MTCOT).
- Although a TCS is currently not required by the utility company's work force or its contractor for most installations, a TCS requirement is recommended on a case-by-case basis for the following situations:
 - Complex traffic control that may go beyond the basic MUTCD level.
 - Work that lasts for more than a few days and has traffic control installed.
 - High-speed and high-volume traffic locations.
 - Flagging operations at intersections.
 - Projects that require coordination between contractors, users, businesses, and jurisdictions.
 - MUTCD Part 6B.01 "... Only those individuals who are properly trained in proper temporary traffic control practices and have a basic understanding of the principles should supervise the selection, placement, and maintenance of TTC devices ..."

These measures would help to ensure that the drivers of our highways would know what to expect in a work zone regardless of who is performing the work. Utilities, counties and cities must comply with the MUTCD and WSDOT work zone requirements, but we realize if there is no enforcement, compliance will not be as high. WSDOT has two regions that have utility work zone inspectors, and they have proven to be very effective. The WZSTF feels that every region should strongly consider the use of a utility inspector.

It is our intent that this information be made available and recommended to the regions through your office. Especially to those regions without utility inspectors or those that are not integrating work zone requirements into utility permits.

Please let us know if you would like to discuss this further and if you need any assistance with work zone standards and training.

CC/KJD:vst

cc: Gummada Murthy, 47350
Don Nelson, 47321
Mike Horton, 47390