



Why you need a plan to CONQUER STRUCK-BYS

According to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), the construction industry experienced over 1,300 lost-time injuries (LTIs) that were categorized as *Struck Against Object or Struck By Object* last year. This accounted for over 25% of all LTIs in the sector in 2017. In the last few years, struck-bys has become one of the biggest killers on construction sites, surpassing falls. Even workers who were performing the job of signaller have been killed by the same heavy equipment they were directing.

The Ministry of Labour (MOL) plans to roll out a two-tiered blitz initiative as a means of addressing this rising concern. The two phases of the blitz will specifically target reversing equipment on construction projects. The initial phase will begin on September 1st and last until the end of the month. It involves helping companies with compliance and prevention education. The second phase involves launching an enforcement campaign that will run from October 1st until October 31st.

The MOL's blitz also states that "constructors and employers must ensure vehicle and equipment operation is planned and organized and that adequate traffic control measures and procedures are in place at projects".



But with so much road work constantly going on across the province, roadside safety is an ongoing challenge. Heather Lewis is one of the health and safety coordinators

for the Coco Group, one of the busiest paving companies in Ontario. IHSA teamed up with her and Coco during its development of a new campaign that will focus on struck-bys.

Developing traffic protection plans

Superintendents and project managers face a variety of obstacles when developing traffic protection plans for road work zones. This makes maintaining a safe work site a challenge for people like Heather Lewis.

There can be contract restraints—the inability to close lanes on a roadway and maintaining the flow of traffic. In addition to that, some jurisdictions may be looking for work to be done at night so as not to affect the travelling public, which can further increase the hazards that need to be dealt with.

Other concerns that come up when creating a job plan for heavy equipment work involve the access and egress points for work vehicles and how they must travel in and out of the flow of traffic on public roads in a safe manner.

"Obviously reversing in these types of situations is going to create a significant hazard for equipment operators and workers," says Lewis.

We generally have to deal with tight work areas, so it becomes important to create turn-around zones or areas that can be exclusively for reversing or three-point turns. We want to minimize reversing as much as possible in these kind of work zones.

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— Heather Lewis



Dealing with distractions

Distraction is also a key hazard in today's digital landscape—not only from the travelling public but also from the workforce.

IHSA's Struck-by campaign will focus on staying alert when working with and around heavy equipment. It will seek to raise awareness about the importance of communication between workers and heavy equipment operators.

Struck-by incidents are a significant concern and that's why we need to stay alert at all times! Having policies in place to prohibit the use of electronic personal devices is one of our company requirements. In addition, we also require that employees having in-depth conversations move away from the work zone to a safe location in order to be removed from the line of fire and reduce the risk of them being struck.

Lewis also points out that once you address the communication on site, you also must be vigilant in watching out for the travelling public.

A construction site changes hour-to-hour, minute-to-minute, so communication becomes vitally important as we get our traffic protection setup as per the Ontario Traffic Manual, and have the appropriate signage and delineation that is required to ensure that we direct vehicular traffic through our work zone in a safe manner. We need to make sure that the public knows where we are working, so that signage and awareness is just as important.

Putting the plan into practice

While communication and planning are the primary focus of working safely around heavy equipment, one of most important aspects of a safe and effective traffic protection plan is to conduct an onsite review prior to commencing work.

A safe and effective traffic protection plan involves coming out to the site, evaluating the hazards and looking at the traffic patterns. These are all key points to be incorporated into your plan. So we want to ensure that Superintendents and Project Managers who are preparing the traffic plan are actually here on site, so they can see the issues, they can spot additional concerns, and address hazards they may not have detected by referring to the contract documents.

With the rate of growth in cities across the province, there doesn't seem to be an end in sight for the amount of infrastructure developments or road work on our major highways and arteries. The best plan we can have moving forward is one that equips our workers with what they need to navigate these high-hazard working conditions, and raise awareness of the importance of staying alert around heavy equipment and vehicular traffic.

Having signallers and workers that are trained, aware, and alert, and who understand their duties and responsibilities in these kind of working conditions is an excellent step towards ending struck-by incidents.