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Audit: Improvements Needed On MDOT Highway Work Zone Safety

Although the Department of Transportation's oversight and compliance with work zone safety policies for highway construction sites is mostly sufficient, a new audit found some improvements are needed to minimize risk of crashes and protect roadside workers.

The [report](#) released by the Office of the Auditor General outlined analysis of crash data and MDOT responses to incidents on highways where work occurs and found that despite the department's mostly sufficient conduct, there is a lack of full compliance with regulations of traffic control, project reviews and training for safety and mobility.

MDOT agreed with the audit's findings and recommendations. Auditor General Doug Ringler found that the department's oversight of work zone safety and mobility was mostly satisfactory but noted that on 64 percent of construction projects observed during the audit, MDOT could not demonstrate a crash analysis was conducted.

"We recommend MDOT improve its policies and procedures to ensure MDOT offices utilize crash data to develop and enhance the traffic control of its project work zones," the report said.

Similarly, MDOT's efforts to comply with work zone safety requirements were found to be mostly sufficient. The audit found that the department did not ensure completion of transportation management plans for 53 percent of projects with lesser work zone impacts, and 54 percent of ones with greater work zone impacts.

"MDOT needs to improve oversight of its offices' compliance with work zone safety operational guidelines," the report said. "Improved oversight will help ensure consistent review and management of safety and mobility impacts of work zones on all construction projects."

The field review process for issues with work zones requires both daytime and nighttime formal reviews of construction site areas to maintain effective traffic control. Auditors found that MDOT offices across the state were inconsistent with formal field reviews, with some relying on the lone statewide reviewer employed by the Work Zone Management Unit, who was responsible for 277 reviews during the period covered by the audit.

"MDOT needs to improve its formal field review process to ensure projects are routinely reviewed to identify and correct potential issues impacting the safety and mobility in work zones," the report said.

The auditor's final recommendation was to boost training requirements for MDOT personnel, consultants and contractors. While the department provides annual work zone update trainings and specialized sessions for traffic regulators and summer maintenance workers, most MDOT personnel are not required to attend. Auditors also found that MDOT did not track attendance at half the training meetings during the audit period.

"We recommend MDOT review and enhance training requirements to ensure training provides the most current knowledge and skills to manage safety and mobility in work zones," the report said.

– By Lily Guiney

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