

NOTICE OF PROPOSED GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Connector September 2018 newsletter

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 227.112, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is hereby seeking comment on Connector September 2018 newsletter [Wis. Stat. ch. 346], a proposed guidance document.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Comments may be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for 21 days by:

1. Department's website: <https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wi/dot/guidance-docs?guidDocId=OPA166>

2. Mailing written comments to:
Office of Public Affairs
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
4822 Madison Yards Way
PO Box 7910
Madison, WI 53707-7910

WEBSITE LOCATION OF FINAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

The final version of this guidance document will be posted at wisconsindot.gov to allow for ongoing comment.

AGENCY CONTACT

DOTOPAGuidanceDocs@DOT.WI.GOV



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The Connector

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Motorists, farmers be safe, patient, alert while sharing roads during fall harvest

Wisconsin DOT - September 28

Agriculture contributes more than \$88 billion annually to Wisconsin's economy and supports more than 413,000 jobs statewide.



Many of the farmers who make this happen are currently out in the fields harvesting summer crops to deliver to markets throughout the country and around the world. Those paths to market include Wisconsin roads, feeding an urgent need for motorists and farmers to safely share roads during harvest time.

A total of 1,280 crashes involving motorists and [agricultural vehicles](#) were reported in Wisconsin since 2011. These crashes resulted in 640 injuries and 21 fatalities. Each one was avoidable, if proper safety measures were applied.

"Safety along our roadways requires that everyone do their part," said WisDOT Secretary Dave Ross. "Motorists should provide farm vehicles extra room to operate and anticipate the possibility they may slow down or turn. Agriculture vehicle operators should ensure they use appropriate lights, signage and signals, and comply with weight restrictions."

Motorists

Motorists should expect that farmers will be driving ag equipment to and from farm fields along Wisconsin roads. Many of these [implements of husbandry](#), as they are also known, travel at slow speeds. They are machines primarily built for field work rather than roads, making their operations along roadways cumbersome. Agricultural machines are often large and sometimes too wide for the lane they are traveling in, so they may extend into adjacent lanes. Considering these factors, motorists are asked to practice the following during harvest season:

Awareness – Being aware of your surroundings is important whenever driving, but during harvest season that awareness needs to be heightened. Scan the road ahead for ag equipment and slow down when sharing the road with these vehicles.

Patience – Practice patience when sharing the road with ag equipment and be cautious, if passing. In Wisconsin, it is illegal to pass an implement of husbandry in a no passing zone.

Preparedness – Be aware that ag vehicles make a lot of turns. This is especially important to know when passing on the left as the farmer may be turning left onto a roadway, driveway or field entrance. Ag vehicles operating along roads are usually doing so to get to and from farm fields. Because of this they often make unexpected and sudden turns into and out of fields running along roads and highways.

Ag vehicle operators

In addition to motorists practicing safe driving during harvest, farmers need to follow [agricultural vehicle safety](#) practices. This includes ensuring that agricultural equipment meets all legal requirements before heading out on Wisconsin roads, watching for other drivers while on the road and being continuously aware of where their vehicle is in relation to the road.

Operations - When traveling on a roadway, stay as far to the right as safely possible. Be aware of vehicles on all sides, and be sure traffic is clear and it is safe to do so before making any turns.

Lighting and marking - Know [lighting and marking requirements](#) for ag vehicles and make

sure all lights are in working order. Lighting draws attention to the unique size, shape and speed of ag vehicles and alerts motorists that caution is required.

Weight restrictions - Be familiar with road weight restrictions. [Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection](#) provides a statewide map with information about weight limits. More information about related permits, exemption and weight limits can be found on [WisDOT's website](#).

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Taking train safety seriously starts with following the rules

Wisconsin DOT - September 24

Wisconsin boasts more than 3,300 miles of rail line, guiding trains filled with passengers and commerce bound for cities far and wide. Along those miles of track lie more than 4,030 public rail crossings, each one a crossroads where critical decisions are made.

Wisconsin's rail network is an avenue for passenger and freight transport, but it is a system that comes with great responsibility in terms of [rail transportation awareness and safety](#). In 2017 alone, 19 people were injured and six died in 42 railroad crossing crashes. While crash numbers are down from 2016, the number of injuries and deaths increased.

"One crash is one too many," said WisDOT Railroad and Safety Engineering Supervisor Lisa Stern. "Whenever tracks are in sight, motorists and pedestrians should assume a train is nearby and take the necessary safety precautions."

For motorists, this means slowing down at railroad crossings and looking both ways to ensure there is no train coming before crossing the tracks. And always stop when red crossing lights are blinking, crossing bars are down or both. It is about understanding the dangers and following the rules, which apply to every pedestrian, motorist and anyone else within the vicinity of railroad tracks.

[Pedestrians need to:](#)

Cross train tracks only at designated road or pedestrian crossings with either a crossbuck (X-shaped warning sign), flashing red lights and/or a gate. Crossing at any other place is not only dangerous, but it is illegal trespassing.

Stay alert around railroad tracks. No texting, headphones or other distractions that would prevent hearing an approaching train.

Never trust hearing a train coming. Today's trains are quieter than ever. Someone with their back to a train will likely [not hear it coming](#) until it is too late.

Never walk on tracks. Railroad tracks are private property, which makes walking on them trespassing in addition to being highly dangerous. It can take more than one mile for a train to stop, so it is too late to stop in time by the time a locomotive engineer sees a trespasser or vehicle on the tracks.

[Motorists and pedestrians must:](#)



Crossing at Main Street in Germantown. Photo courtesy of Mike Yuhas.

Always expect a train at every highway-rail intersection. Freight trains don't travel on fixed schedules and passenger train schedules may change.

Never race a train to rail crossing. A train's size creates the illusion that it is closer and moving slower than it is. Know that an approaching train is always closer and moving faster than perceived.

Know that trains have a wider reach than expected and can overhang tracks by at least three feet on either side of the tracks. Loose straps or other items hanging from rail cars may extend even further and hit, injure or kill anyone who falls within its reach.

Blue signs



Another item drivers should be aware of at railroad crossings are the "report problem" blue signs. They are important for the public and for first responders to know about, especially in situations where a vehicle stalls and is on or very near the tracks, says Stern. The sign will have a toll-free number to the that railroad company's dispatch center where issues can be reported. Each crossing's sign has a unique 7-character code that a caller will give to the dispatcher indicating the address of that crossing.

The bottom line is that no one is a match for a train, says Stern.

"When a train hits a car, it has the same impact as a car running over a soft drink can. Nothing is so important that it requires paying for it with a life."

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Mobile GPS connects with WISCORS to save time, money on transportation construction and maintenance

Claire Franken - September 18

While Global Positioning System (GPS) use seems commonplace in navigation tools and phones, higher grade GPS devices in road construction are becoming increasingly common.

Mobile GPS equipment adds an element of precision that saves time and money. WisDOT engineers have benefitted since 2008 from synching mobile devices with the statewide GPS and [Wisconsin Continuously Operating Reference Station \(WISCORS\) Network](#) on construction projects. These devices communicate positioning and coordinate with accuracy of centimeters for both vertical and horizontal directions. This allows the engineer to lay out and verify any item specified in the plan.



Southwest Region Project Development Section Engineer Greg Payne uses a mobile GPS to verify design information on a recent project.

Before widespread use of mobile technology, engineers relied on staking from contractors to manually measure distances and depths using tape measures and levels. This was a much greater level of effort and required additional contractor coordination. These manual checks were estimated to take about 60 percent longer compared to GPS methods. It also required more resources and

workers, costing time and money. By reducing survey time, staff now focus more on other critical inspection items. The device also enhances work quality as inspectors can verify alignment and slopes accurately and repeatedly, reducing rework.

"The GPS technology is a remarkable tool and helps make the construction process more automated," said WisDOT Senior Project Development Engineer Gregory Payne. "The tool has already proven itself to be a great asset for the WisDOT team."

Surrounded by mounds of dirt and piles of old pavement waiting to be transformed into a roundabout, Payne can locate exactly where a curb for a median island will be constructed simply by turning on the device and picking the alignment used for that project. Without any visual cues, the device can pinpoint any location within the project as well as give elevation, which is important for constructing curb, gutter and roadway slopes.

The accuracy of the GPS technology caught what would have been a \$10,000 error in a 2016 project near St. Croix Crossing. The original measurement called for WisDOT to pay for three additional inches of concrete base along a 1,300-foot stretch of roadway. Through cross-checking with GPS devices, the miscalculation was discovered before the excess base was poured.

GPS technology streamlines the entire development process. Project designers create plans for new development using WISCORS. Then, they create a 3D model so that contractors can use their own surveying technology, as there is not an industry standard for programming software. During the construction phase, WisDOT checks the execution of a project with GPS mobile devices independent from the contractors by testing elevations and project parameters to ensure they meet WisDOT standards. The traveling public benefits through expanded use of this technology as WisDOT projects are completed sooner, reducing traffic interruptions related to work zones.

More About WISCORS

The invisible geospatial grid that guides machinery and construction began in 2008. This network, known as WISCORS, is a statewide Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) reference station network. GNSS describes any satellite constellation that provides positioning, navigation and timing services on a global basis. WISCORS reference stations track both the United States NAVSTAR GPS and Russian Federation (GLONASS) global satellite systems. The operation of the WISCORS Network requires the collaboration of state and local government agencies, federal government, and multiple educational institutions.

The WISCORS Network is crucial for using the mobile devices, as its 85 permanent reference stations are what provide GNSS corrections to mobile users in real-time. Thus, when Payne uses the GPS mobile devices to check elevations and locations, he is connecting to the WISCORS Network.

WisDOT is partnered with the federal government (NOAA-NGS), state and local government agencies, and multiple educational institutions in the development, implementation and operation of WISCORS.

While construction workers continue to manually operate machinery to execute a project, they still benefit from WISCORS. Bulldozers and other construction machinery are outfitted with the positioning technology with displays in front of the driver seat. The information shows the machines' real-time position and movement, and acts as a guide for operators throughout the project.

WISCORS doesn't just benefit WisDOT; users include private engineers, surveyors, federal government, scientists, academia and agriculture. The network benefits farmers by providing GNSS corrections for precise agricultural applications. Auto steer tractors can be used for precise crop

planting, fertilizing and harvesting, making agriculture—a process typically guided by the uncontrollable weather and climate—more predictable and streamlined.

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Tow truck driver's brush with death stresses need for drivers to move over, slow down

Claire Franken - September 28

When Tow Truck Operator Todd Menzel pulled over to extract a truck's trailer that had slipped off the highway in February 2014, what started as just another motorist assist quickly turned tragic.



When Menzel was hit by the car while working a roadside incident, he was hit from behind and thrown into the air landing between the car and the truck's trailer. He pulled himself out using his arms, pressing against the sedan before hobbling to safety.

He never saw the white sedan coming toward him. When he was hit from behind and thrown into the air, landing between the car and the truck's trailer, he didn't even have time to see his life flash before his eyes.

"I felt like I could see every individual snowflake as I flipped into the air. I could sense every sound around me," said Menzel. "I didn't really know what was happening until I was under the car."

If the sedan moved forward any further, he would be crushed. Since Menzel knew that secondary crashes can be common, he felt a sense of urgency to get out from between the two vehicles. He was sure he would not be afforded two miracles in one day.

He pulled himself out using his arms, pressing against the sedan. One of his legs felt badly injured, so he hobbled on the other over to safety near the tow trucks and patrol

vehicles. Menzel's thighs, calves, neck and back were bruised to the bone, but he didn't have any critical injuries. Though he was in serious pain, he survived.

Menzel continues to work as a tow operator under his family business but the crash haunts him.

"I still feel effects from the crash," said Menzel. "I have knee pain and back problems, but I'm glad to be alive."

As a tow operator for the past 21 years, Menzel has trained many new operators and uses the crash as a cautionary tale to always place safety forefront while on the job.

"It took me over 20 years to be in a situation like this and I was doing everything right. Keep your head on a swivel and trust your instincts," Menzel tells other workers.

That day four years ago, he felt relatively safe and protected from the wide shoulders, the patrol cars and the tow trucks that created somewhat of a barrier to traffic. Menzel doesn't want to feel comfortable like that again, thinking he could have somehow sensed the crash if he was just on higher alert. Now, Menzel operates on such high-alert, he worries he psyches himself out and is simply waiting for catastrophe.

"We're vulnerable and unprotected. It's difficult going to work knowing you don't have control over

what could happen to you," said Menzel. "Other people can control their driving behavior, and they should be more cognizant of our safety and wellbeing by slowing down and paying attention."

Menzel urges motorists to drive as if their own family members are responding to roadside assistance calls. The [Move Over Law](#) requires drivers to shift lanes or slow down to provide a "safety zone" for a squad car, ambulance, fire truck, tow truck, utility vehicle, or a highway maintenance vehicle stopped on the side of a road with its warning lights flashing.

"Being five minutes late to work, or taking a little bit longer to respond to a text ultimately doesn't really affect your life, but the consequences of those actions can affect mine. I have three kids and that day could've changed the trajectory of their lives, too."

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Move over or slow down for tow truck drivers working along highways

State averages 200 crashes annually involving at least 1 emergency response vehicle

Wisconsin DOT - September 6

The second week of September is Towing Industry Awareness Week in Wisconsin, an important opportunity to talk about driver responsibility under the state Move Over Law.

There were nearly 140,000 crashes reported statewide in 2017, with many causing injuries and property damages. Tow truck operators provide crucial aid at a crash scene by clearing debris and moving disabled vehicles out of the roadway.



Wisconsin averages more than 200 crashes annually involving at least one emergency vehicle that is engaged in an emergency response.

Wisconsin's "[Move Over Law](#)" requires drivers to shift lanes or reduce speed to help create a safety buffer for stopped law enforcement, emergency and maintenance vehicles – including tow trucks. Failure of motorists to move over is one of the primary reasons that motor vehicle crash scenes can be so dangerous, even for those specially trained in emergency response.

Additionally, Wisconsin's "[Steer It, Clear It Law](#)" requires drivers involved in a crash or breakdown to move their vehicle to a safe location, such as a wide shoulder or pull-off zone, provided that the vehicle is operable and nobody is hurt.

Wisconsin is among many states that organizes [highway safety patrols](#) to clear traffic incidents in high-volume areas and work zones. Safety patrol trucks help clear debris and disabled vehicles that otherwise becomes hazardous to other drivers.

Towing Industry Awareness Week provides an opportunity to reflect on safer driving habits, something that each of us can continue to do every day of the year with these simple tips.

- Eliminate distractions such as eating, drinking or using a phone while driving.
- Slow down when you see flashing lights. Remember that a car traveling 60 mph travels 88 feet per second, and the faster you go the longer it takes to stop.

- Be patient and plan ahead. Avoid tailgating and provide room on the road.

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