

AASHTO Supports T² Centers

AASHTO Policy Resolution PR-2-91

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) recently passed a resolution in support of the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP). All FHWA Technology Transfer (T²) Centers, including the New Hampshire T² Center, fall within the framework of RTAP.

As passed by the AASHTO Policy Committee on February, 8, 1991, Policy Resolution PR-2-91, Technical Assistance Programs, reads as follows:

WHEREAS, the Rural Technical Assistance Program has facilitated access to highway technology for rural road and street departments, enabling town and county governments to do more with limited resources; and

WHEREAS, the benefits are significant, and have generated strong support for the program among local units of government, their associations, and others; and

WHEREAS, the success of the Rural Technical Assistance Program, was recognized in the AASHTO Report, Innovation – A Strategy for Research, Development, and Technology Transfer, and a recommendation was made for federal funding of at least \$7,000,000 per year for the period 1992 through 1996; and

WHEREAS, an expansion of the concept, by providing technical assistance to urban communities, would be a useful addition to the highway technology transfer system and in keeping with one of the goals of the National Transportation Policy, to make technical information available to all levels of government; and

WHEREAS, federal funding for the Rural Technical Assistance Program has declined in fiscal years 1989 and 1990 and a further decrease is expected in 1991.

Training And The Law

Lawsuits can result from a lack of training

Many lawsuits are the result of sufficient training, or the absence of training. Knowledge and information are essential commodities for any organization. Keeping everyone abreast of recent problems or developments, either technical or legal issues, is necessary for optimum performance. It can also keep individual workers, supervisors, and city officials out of court.

Like many other policies in government and private business, determining training priorities tends to be "reactionary" in most cases. Responding to problems that have already occurred is natural and expected, but in today's public works environment, a more "pro-active" approach is needed. The idea is to determine what might happen in your department sometime in the future.

Although funding may be a problem, there is no time like the present to consider departmental needs and start planning for a training budget. An analysis of lawsuits at the beginning may help bolster requests. Public officials, city/town administrators and department staff should review training as an investment that can not only help to avoid monetary losses but provide better service to the community and help build more confidence in the department.

At left is a list of training items to consider:

1. Where are the problems? Is someone assigned to monitor publications to stay on top of trends in court decisions and potential liabilities?
2. Work on one problem at a time. Set priorities for training -- Who needs it most and what training is needed now? What would be the hardest thing for your department to defend if a lawsuit should arise?
3. Keep records. Document what type of training was held, who were the instructors, what was the curriculum, and who attended.
4. Meet with legal staff (city/town attorney) regularly and have them review training policies and priorities as well as discuss current cases and trends in litigation affecting public works departments.
5. Look around for training opportunities. Tech schools, universities, community colleges, and professional organizations are potential training sources. Check all resources on a continued basis.
6. Consider different methods of training like "hands-on" experience and demonstrations.
7. Know the objectives of training -- increase knowledge, change conduct, change attitudes, improve and maintain skills.
8. Keep good training records -- content of the training, appropriateness of the actual job, qualifications of the instructor, attendance and performance records of trainees.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. AASHTO supports continuation of the Rural Technical Assistance Program at an adequate level of funding.
2. AASHTO encourages the Federal Highway Administration to initiate an urban technical assistance program patterned on the successful Rural Technical Assistance Program. ●

The above article was constructed using material from a handout prepared by the NHMA Property Liability Insurance Trust, Concord, NH. ●