

Road Business

A quarterly newsletter from New Hampshire's Local Technical Assistance Program
Summer 2025

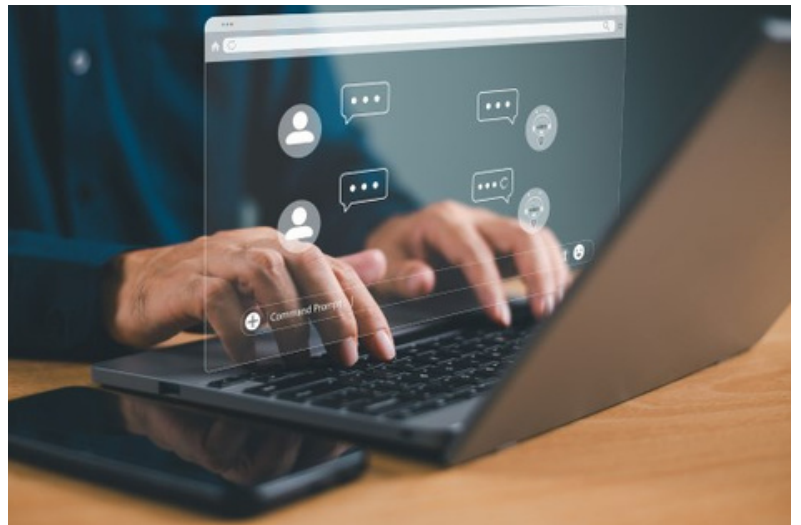
THE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST NOT ON YOUR PAYROLL: HOW AI CAN GROW PUBLIC WORKS AWARENESS

WRITTEN BY MARILEE ENUS | DIRECTOR | UNH TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CENTER

You've probably had that day—a call from an angry resident ticketed for parking on the street during a winter storm, a visitor complaining about a plow-damaged mailbox, and a frustrated commuter venting on social media about a road closure.

You already wear multiple hats. And, in a small department, even more. Many of these issues could be avoided with better public awareness, but you and your team can't be everywhere at once. Even if you could, marketing and communication may not be your expertise.

What your department needs is someone to translate your work into clear, engaging messages, handle public outreach, and ensure residents understand policies and projects.



"Bringing more awareness to what we do sounds great, Marilee . . . but a dedicated communication staff is just NOT in our budget."

Cue artificial intelligence (AI).

Generative AI, like ChatGPT, Copilot, or Gemini, is the communications

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About UNH T2 and NHLTAP

The UNH Technology Transfer Center fosters a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound surface transportation system by improving skills and increasing knowledge of the transportation workforce and decision-makers. As the site of the state’s Local Technical Assistance Program, it works to enable local counties, cities, and towns to improve their roads and bridges by supplying them with a variety of training programs, an information clearinghouse, new and existing technology updates, personalized technical assistance, training videos and materials, and newsletters. LTAP Centers nationally are able to provide local road departments with workforce development services; resources to enhance safety and security; solutions to environmental, congestion, capacity, and other issues.

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Tabletop culvert building activity at Installation and Maintenance of Culverts in Merrimack on June 5, 2025

“SUMMER AFTERNOON – SUMMER AFTERNOON; TO ME THOSE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE TWO MOST BEAUTIFUL WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.”

–Henry James

During the cold, gloomy days of winter, I often find myself daydreaming about summer — the warmth of the sun, tending to my flower beds, and enjoying long days outdoors with family and friends. But somehow, I always manage to forget that summer also comes with its own challenges... like those sweltering, unbearably hot days — and today is certainly one of them!

Extreme weather always brings to mind the men and women of public works. Whether it's oppressive heat, pouring rain, deep snow, or freezing temperatures, you're out there keeping our communities running safely and smoothly. Your resilience and dedication never go unnoticed. My deepest gratitude to each of you for the essential work you do, day in and day out.

We've had a very busy and productive start to the year, and it's only heating up — literally and figuratively! Our training calendar is packed with valuable sessions covering a wide range of topics, with workshops held in locations across the state. Be sure to check out the current offerings on our training calendar [here](#). If you have any questions about upcoming workshops or need assistance with registration, don't hesitate to reach out.

Looking ahead, we'll soon begin planning the 2026 workshop calendar — and yes, the printed calendar too! If you'd like to host a training next year, or if you have any great photos you'd like to submit for the printed calendar, please send them to me at Lee.Cooper@unh.edu. We love showcasing the great work that you do and beautiful scenes from around the state.

Here's to a safe, successful, and maybe just slightly cooler summer!

Take care, - Lee Cooper



A workshop attendee gets some time behind the saw with instructor, Brent Beebe, looking on during Chainsaw Safety & Maintenance in Lincoln on June 12, 2025.

partner you didn't know you could afford. Public works administrators can use AI to quickly craft clear messaging, simplify technical jargon, and develop effective education and awareness strategies for the public—all without adding a single staff member.

You already know the value of strong communication in maintaining efficient operations. You also know the challenges—limited staff and resources, technical documents that don't easily translate for the public, citizen expectations for fast, responsive communication across multiple platforms, and the ongoing need for consistency.

The Solution: “Hire” a Generative AI Tool

Generative AI tools can help tackle communication and administrative challenges by acting as an assistant to:

1. Create (really great) outreach and informational materials quickly.

From newsletters and press releases to project updates and social media posts, generative AI has you covered. By eliminating the “blank page” problem, AI generates content in seconds, giving you a good starting point to tweak and customize. This saves time, helps craft strategic messaging, and ensures you never miss an opportunity to communicate about public works.



2. Simplify technical jargon for public understanding.

I wouldn't pretend to know how to fly a plane, perform a medical procedure, or bake a French pastry—those aren't in my wheelhouse, and much of the terminology would go right over my head. The same goes for the general public when it comes to complex engineering concepts and public works practices. Without a technical background, understanding public works projects and tasks—and the vital ways in which public works teams contribute to communities—can be a challenge. AI bridges this gap by digesting, summarizing, and rewriting technical content into clear, accessible language.

For instance, I recently asked AI to condense a 300+ page government-issued emergency management document into both a 10-page desk reference and a one-page cheat sheet and was pleasantly surprised by the results!

3. Drive public awareness and understanding.

AI can help you develop engagement and outreach materials, from surveys to educational posts and awareness campaigns. It can identify common questions and concerns from your audience, or highlight gaps in public knowledge, and then refine messaging for better awareness. AI helped me to develop a citizen-facing winter guidance document, communication plan, and series of FAQs based on a specific city's winter snow and ice policy.

The results were practical, educational, informative, and easy to understand, as well as consistent with the city's policy.

Bonus? AI can even analyze your existing content to determine what topics and formats resonate most with your audience.

4. Increase compliance through better public education.

Many public works challenges arise from a true case of “not knowing.” AI can craft messaging that effectively educates residents on policies and procedures, leading to improved compliance and fewer complaints.

By analyzing emails, social media comments, and even call logs (be sure to strip personal or confidential information), AI can pinpoint recurring issues—such as confusion about winter parking bans or recycling rules—so departments can proactively address them through newsletters, FAQs, and social media updates. AI can also detect patterns in citizen complaints or service requests, revealing areas where better education is needed.

For example, if mailbox damage complaints spike after snowstorms, AI can suggest launching a pre-winter awareness campaign on proper mailbox placement.

5. Tell your story.

For fun, I asked AI to tell me a story about a town that neglected pavement preservation but still had a happy ending. The fictional yet all-too-real tale of

Maple Creek it told was a great blend of tragedy, humor, and education—perfect for raising awareness and generating support for road preservation best practices. Whether you're trying to change recycling behaviors, communicate the benefits of a new piece of equipment, highlight an innovative winter operations practice, or simply showcase how awesome your public works team is, AI can help you tell the story.



Real-World Applications in Public Works

During our recent webinar on AI in public works, several use cases stood out as prime examples of how AI can make an immediate impact:

- **Project updates:** Draft clear, engaging updates informing residents of road closures, detours, and project details that may impact their daily lives.
- **Prepare RFPs:** AI can generate a structured RFP draft with minimal input. By adding key project details or referencing past RFPs, it can refine the draft to align with standard procurement language, municipal requirements, and project specifics.
- **Stormwater and environmental compliance:** Develop outreach materials that educate residents on stormwater management and pollution prevention.

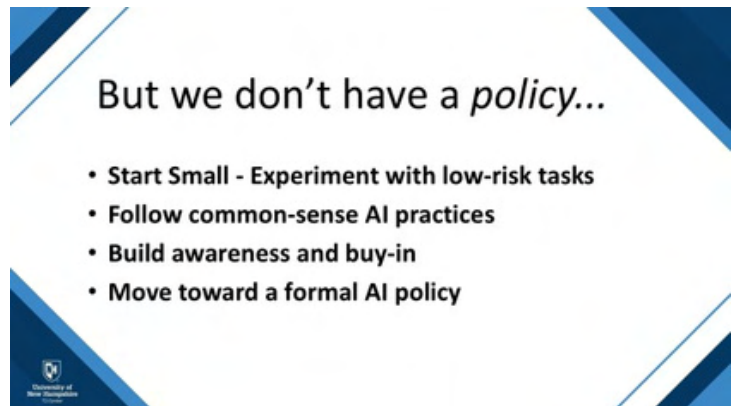
- Recycling and waste management: Draft newsletter articles and social media posts educating on the impacts of “wish-cycling” (attempting to recycle items that cannot be recycled) or highlighting local recycling successes.
- Budget and infrastructure planning transparency:
- Generate reports, translate budget documents, and turn asset management plans into digestible, public friendly formats.
- Addressing Concerns and Ensuring Accuracy
- AI is a powerful tool, but human oversight is essential. Keep these and other best practices in mind:
 - Review for accuracy and tone:
 - AI can draft content, but it’s crucial to verify alignment with municipal policies and regulations.
 - Customize for local context: Every municipality is different, and AI-generated content may require a human touch to reflect local priorities and community values.
 - Use AI to enhance, not replace, human expertise:
 - AI should assist communication efforts, not replace human judgment.
 - Never share confidential or sensitive information with AI: Unless your IT and leadership have
 - Develop an AI policy: Establish guidelines for AI use within your department and agency.
 - Cite AI’s support when appropriate: Transparency in AI-generated content builds trust with your audience. I put together a cheat sheet (with the help of ChatGPT!) to help determine when to disclose AI assistance; check it out below.

Give AI a Try

AI is here to stay, and stronger, more dynamic tools are on the horizon. My advice: start small, and have fun! Test AI on a newsletter, a series of FAQs, or a public notice. Engage with others using AI to inspire new and novel applications.

AI offers public works professionals a way to build public works awareness through enhanced communication, without

additionally burdening your already busy team. By streamlining routine tasks, it frees up time for more meaningful work. In our recent webinar, many participants shared that they would happily use this extra time to be in the field with staff or focus on their team’s professional development—both critical priorities. With AI handling routine communication, public works teams can focus on what they do best: building and maintaining the infrastructure that keeps our communities running.



For more AI inspiration, check out UNH T2’s recent webinar recording on AI in public works and download a handout:

- **Watch the webinar** (bit.ly/41MhJzZ)
- **100 Ideas for Using ChatGPT in Public Works** (bit.ly/4c8gCzs)
- **AI as Your Public Works Assistant Handout** (bit.ly/4kKF4e8)



This article was reprinted from the APWA Reporter - May 2025 Issue

<https://www.apwa.org/news-media/reporter-magazine/>

WHAT IS NEW HAMPSHIRE'S STRATEGIC HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN (SHSP)?

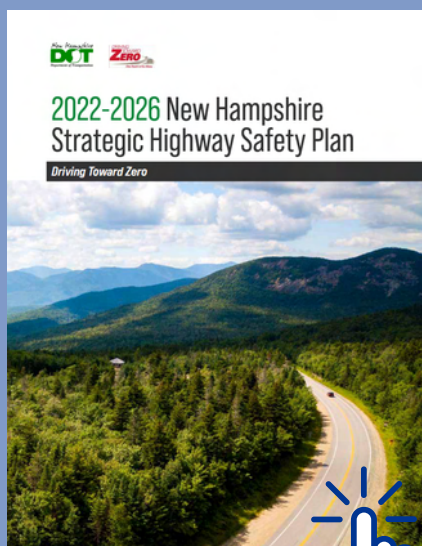
AND WHY SHOULD LOCAL HIGHWAY DEPARTMENTS CARE?

If you're a highway agent, DPW director, or municipal official new to the public works world, chances are you've heard about roadway safety goals, but maybe not about the Strategic Highway Safety Plan—known as the SHSP. New Hampshire's SHSP is more than just another acronym or state document. It's the blueprint for how we work—together—to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads. The current plan runs through 2026, and the next update process begins in 2026 for a 2027 release.

But what does that have to do with your town?

The SHSP: A Statewide Road Map to Safer Roads

The SHSP is New Hampshire's official safety strategy under the federally funded Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). That means it sets priorities for safety investments and guides how resources—particularly HSIP funds—are allocated. It's data-driven, multidisciplinary, and collaborative. And yes, local roads are a big part of it.



Check out the
2022-2026 NH
Strategic
Highway Safety
Plan

Each SHSP cycle looks at five years of crash data to identify where fatalities and serious injuries are happening and why. These insights are used to shape strategies around what are called Critical Emphasis Areas (CEAs)—things like Roadway Departure, Intersections, Speed and Aggressive Driving, Distracted Driving, and more.

Local roads account for a significant share of fatal crashes, especially in rural areas like much of New Hampshire. In fact, the plan shows that roadway departure crashes alone account for 70% of all roadway fatalities in the state, and many of these happen on rural, local roads. So while the SHSP is a “statewide” plan, it's not just about interstates or big city arterials—it's very much about your town roads, too.

Local Agencies: A Key Piece of the Safety Puzzle

The SHSP isn't created by NHDOT alone. It's built by a coalition of over 35 partners—including municipal public works departments, local police, fire/EMS, planners, and regional commissions. It reflects the real-world perspectives of those who maintain, patrol, and use our roads.

Local agencies play two critical roles:

1. Implementation: Many of the countermeasures identified—like pavement markings, signage, curve warning systems, roundabouts, and rumble strips—fall within the scope of municipal maintenance or improvement projects.
2. Data & Partnerships: Local crash data, public input, and participation in programs like Road Safety Audits (RSAs) or Local Road Safety Plans (LRSPs) feed into the broader effort.

If your town hasn't participated before, the next SHSP update cycle is a great time to start. You don't need to be a data analyst. You just need to bring your on-the-ground knowledge and help identify what's working—and what isn't.

How the SHSP Affects Funding and Programs

The SHSP is directly linked to programs like:

- HSIP (Highway Safety Improvement Program): Funding for infrastructure improvements that reduce crash risk.
- Local Road Safety Plans (LRSPs): Optional but powerful tools for towns to create a custom, data-informed safety plan.
- Proven Safety Countermeasures: A list of FHWA-approved strategies that can qualify for funding with less red tape—like high-friction surfaces, enhanced signage, pedestrian beacons, and more.

To be eligible for some of this support, your project must align with the SHSP's goals and CEAs. So knowing what's in the plan—and getting involved early—can put your town in a better position to pursue funding.

What's Next?

The current SHSP runs through 2026, and the process to update it will begin in 2026 for a 2027 publication. Workshops and working groups will be held across the state, and local input is not only welcome—it's needed.

If you've never heard of the SHSP before today, now is the time to change that. Safety is everyone's responsibility, and the decisions your team makes about signage, speed limits, maintenance, and intersection design can and do save lives.

Let's make sure local roads are part of the safety solution—not an afterthought. When the SHSP update process begins, we hope to see you at the table.

This article was written with the assistance of ChatGPT, a language model developed by OpenAI.



Visit the NHDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) website to learn more about the NH Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) and more.



Photo Credit: New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)

The Rise of All-Way Stop-Controlled Intersections in New Hampshire

WRITTEN BY MARILEE ENUS | DIRECTOR | UNH TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CENTER

This article was written with assistance from AI (ChatGPT) for research and case identification.

All-way stop-controlled (AWSC) intersections are becoming more common in New Hampshire's road safety approach. With each road at an intersection requiring vehicles to stop before entering, AWSCs create a uniform flow and reduce the chances of high-speed collisions. This method not only fosters safer intersections but also ensures every driver has a predictable experience on the road. For intersections with crash histories where previous safety measures have fallen short, AWSCs offer a fresh, proactive approach to intersection control that prioritizes safety without excessive costs.

From Two-Way Stops to All-Way Stop Control: A Shift with Purpose

Historically, New Hampshire relied on two-way stops for most low-traffic intersections. Over time, many of these intersections received safety-driven upgrades, such as larger stop signs, "Cross Traffic Does Not Stop" plaques, overhead flashing beacons, and improved sightlines. These upgrades were not enough, though, at some intersections where crashes persisted. Inspired by states like North Carolina and Delaware, which have seen strong safety gains from AWSC conversions, New Hampshire is now prioritizing AWSCs even at intersections that don't meet the traditional volume criteria set by the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). This "Safe System" shift recognizes that human error is unavoidable but our traffic infrastructure should ensure that mistakes don't lead to severe or fatal accidents.



Photo Credit: New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)

Success Stories - North Carolina and Delaware Lead the Way

The groundwork for AWSC success comes from places like North Carolina and Delaware, where crash rates have dropped dramatically following AWSC implementation. In North Carolina, a study of 53 intersections converted to AWSC revealed impressive numbers: total crashes dropped by 68%, while fatal and injury-related crashes fell by 77%. Furthermore, frontal impact crashes, a common and severe crash type in two-way stop intersections, were reduced by 75%. With costs averaging just \$20,000 per intersection, the benefit-to-cost ratio was a staggering 83:1. Even more impressively, 36 high-risk locations saw fatal and serious crashes drop from 26 before AWSC installations to zero afterward.

Delaware has likewise earned national recognition for reducing severe crashes. By converting 20 intersections to AWSC, Delaware saw considerable improvements in safety on local and collector roads, showing that AWSCs are not just a solution for high-traffic areas but can be highly effective on smaller roads as well. The success in both states has provided New Hampshire with a model to replicate, tailoring AWSC implementation to the unique needs of its roads.

Early Signs of Safety Success in New Hampshire

Inspired by these examples, New Hampshire has implemented AWSC at key intersections, yielding similarly promising results. Take, for example, NH 121 at Hooksett Road in Auburn, which was converted to AWSC in 2015. Despite NH 121 making a sharp 90-degree turn at this intersection, the change to AWSC helped reduce crash rates, indicating that even challenging intersections can benefit from AWSC.



Photo Credit: New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)

Other recent conversions show even clearer safety gains. In Franconia, NH 18 at NH 116 was converted to AWSC in 2021 after years of frequent crashes. This once-problematic intersection has since reported zero crashes—an impressive turnaround that speaks to AWSC’s effectiveness. Another standout example is in Eaton at NH 153, where Ridge Road and Glines Hill Road intersect. Converted to AWSC in 2020, this intersection previously averaged six crashes over five years. Since the conversion, it has seen none. While it may seem obvious, it is hard to ignore the measurable reduction in speed along the formerly uncontrolled approaches, which can be as much as 10-mph. These examples showcase AWSC as a practical solution for New Hampshire’s rural and mixed-use roads, delivering safer intersections for both local residents and through traffic.

Driving Forward: What AWSC Means for New Hampshire’s Roads

AWSC installations are a data-driven approach and a valuable, cost-effective tool that aligns with the state’s commitment to safety. By transforming intersections with challenging layouts, high-speed approaches, or poor visibility into predictable, stop-for-all intersections, AWSCs create a safer, simpler driving environment. For communities across New Hampshire, AWSCs may not only save lives but can also enhance public confidence in local infrastructure investments, fostering a safer road network for everyone.

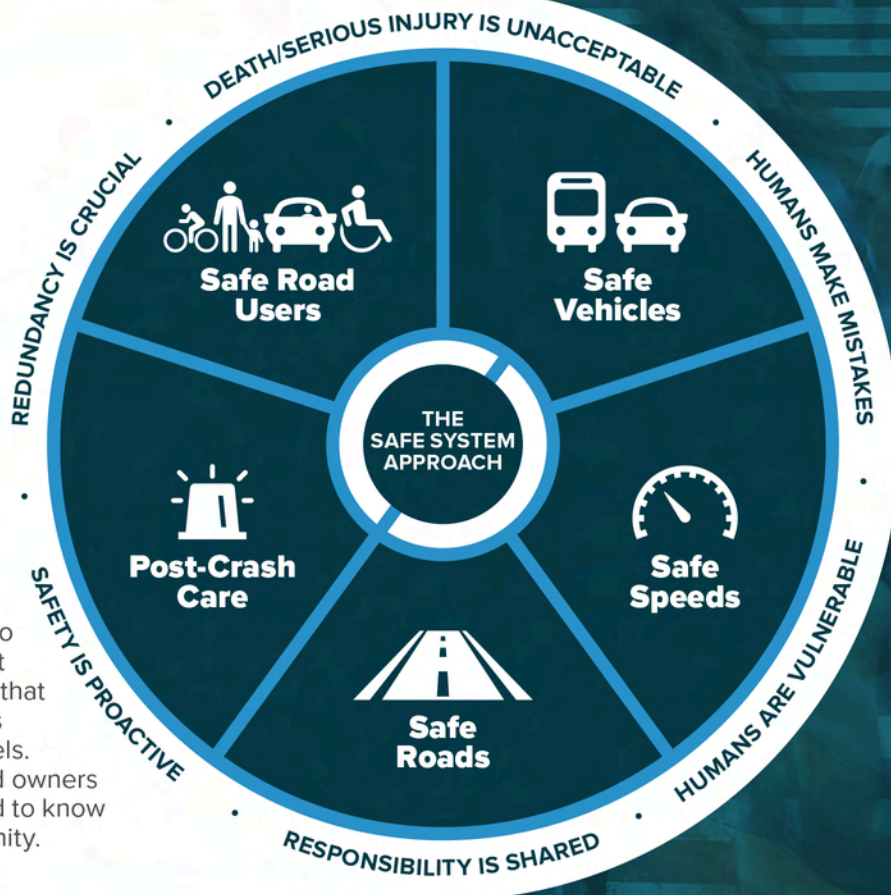
All-way stop-control may not be appropriate for every intersection, and consideration must be given to overall highway operations and/or diversion, but it does provide another valuable option in the roadway safety tool belt.

THE SAFE SYSTEM

APPROACH

Zero is our goal. A Safe System is how we will get there.

Imagine a world where nobody has to die from vehicle crashes. The Safe System approach aims to eliminate fatal & serious injuries for all road users. It does so through a holistic view of the road system that first anticipates human mistakes and second keeps impact energy on the human body at tolerable levels. Safety is an ethical imperative of the designers and owners of the transportation system. Here's what you need to know to bring the Safe System approach to your community.



SAFE SYSTEM PRINCIPLES



Death/Serious Injury is Unacceptable

While no crashes are desirable, the Safe System approach prioritizes crashes that result in death and serious injuries, since no one should experience either when using the transportation system.



Humans Make Mistakes

People will inevitably make mistakes that can lead to crashes, but the transportation system can be designed and operated to accommodate human mistakes and injury tolerances and avoid death and serious injuries.



Humans Are Vulnerable

People have limits for tolerating crash forces before death and serious injury occurs; therefore, it is critical to design and operate a transportation system that is human-centric and accommodates human vulnerabilities.



Responsibility is Shared

All stakeholders (transportation system users and managers, vehicle manufacturers, etc.) must ensure that crashes don't lead to fatal or serious injuries.



Safety is Proactive

Proactive tools should be used to identify and mitigate latent risks in the transportation system, rather than waiting for crashes to occur and reacting afterwards.



Redundancy is Crucial

Reducing risks requires that all parts of the transportation system are strengthened, so that if one part fails, the other parts still protect people.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

FHWA-SA-20-015



Safe Roads for a Safer Future
Investment in roadway safety saves lives

SAFE SYSTEM ELEMENTS

Making a commitment to zero deaths means addressing every aspect of crash risks through the five elements of a Safe System, shown below. These layers of protection and shared responsibility promote a holistic approach to safety across the entire transportation system. The key focus of the Safe System approach is to reduce death and serious injuries through design that accommodates human mistakes and injury tolerances.



Safe Road Users

The Safe System approach addresses the safety of all road users, including those who walk, bike, drive, ride transit, and travel by other modes.



Safe Vehicles

Vehicles are designed and regulated to minimize the occurrence and severity of collisions using safety measures that incorporate the latest technology.



Safe Speeds

Humans are unlikely to survive high-speed crashes. Reducing speeds can accommodate human injury tolerances in three ways: reducing impact forces, providing additional time for drivers to stop, and improving visibility.



Safe Roads

Designing to accommodate human mistakes and injury tolerances can greatly reduce the severity of crashes that do occur. Examples include physically separating people traveling at different speeds, providing dedicated times for different users to move through a space, and alerting users to hazards and other road users.



Post-Crash Care

When a person is injured in a collision, they rely on emergency first responders to quickly locate them, stabilize their injury, and transport them to medical facilities. Post-crash care also includes forensic analysis at the crash site, traffic incident management, and other activities.

THE SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH VS. TRADITIONAL ROAD SAFETY PRACTICES

Traditional

- Prevent crashes → Prevent deaths and serious injuries
- Improve human behavior → Design for human mistakes/limitations
- Control speeding → Reduce system kinetic energy
- Individuals are responsible → Share responsibility
- React based on crash history → Proactively identify and address risks

Safe System

Whereas traditional road safety strives to modify human behavior and prevent all crashes, the Safe System approach also refocuses transportation system design and operation on anticipating human mistakes and lessening impact forces to reduce crash severity and save lives.

WHERE ARE
YOU ON THE
SAFE SYSTEM
JOURNEY?

Implementing the Safe System approach is our shared responsibility, and we all have a role. It requires shifting how we think about transportation safety and how we prioritize our transportation investments. Consider applying a Safe System lens to upcoming projects and plans in your community: put safety at the forefront and design to accommodate human mistakes and injury tolerances. Visit safety.fhwa.dot.gov/zerodeaths to learn more.

TAILGATE TALK LIGHTNING SAFETY

TAILGATE TALK LINK • [HTTPS://NLTAPA.ORG/FILES/DOCS/EDS%20-%20LIGHTNING%20SAFETY.DOCX](https://nltapa.org/files/docs/EDS%20-%20LIGHTNING%20SAFETY.DOCX)

More than 400 people every year are struck by lightning in the United States. On average, 70 of those people struck will die while others will live with life-long, severe disabilities. One interesting fact about lightning strikes worth mentioning – about 90 percent of the deaths are male.

Here are a few tips to help keep you safe the next time a thunderstorm comes through your area:

- All thunderstorms produce lightning, sometimes striking as far away as 10 to 15 miles from any rainfall. This type of lightning is sometimes called 'Bolts from the Blue'.
- If you can hear thunder then you can be struck by lightning. If you hear thunder it is time to go to a safe area!
- **If outdoors** – Avoid water, high ground, open spaces, and standing under or next to trees or buildings. Stay away from all metal objects such as fences, electric wires or machinery. In other words, seek a substantial structure or a vehicle for your protection. If caught outside with no place to go then as a last resort – Crouch down, put your feet together, tuck your head low and cover your ears. Stay at least 15 feet away from other people or metal objects.
- **If indoors** – Avoid water, stay away from doors and windows. Do not use a telephone, especially a cord connected one. Unplug and stay away from appliances, computers, and television sets.



For more information about lightning safety please visit:
<https://www.noaa.gov/jetstream/lightning/lightning-safety>



Did you know? Rubber soles of shoes (or rubber tires) are not insulators from lightning. They offer zero lightning protection.

Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations

NLTAPA has a library of tailgate talks! Visit their website to learn more!

NLTAPA TAILGATE TALK LIBRARY 

Road Business

Word Search

CONGRATS TO LAST THE
WINNER FROM OUR LAST
ISSUE OF ROAD
BUSINESS!
**MATT FROM
MERRIMACK**

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CHAINSAW

BAR

CHAIN

FELLING

CHIPPER

HELMET

LIMBING

BUCKING

CHAPS

**SUBMIT YOUR COMPLETED ENTRY TO T2.CENTER@UNH.EDU BY
7/30/2025 FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A FREE WORKSHOP SEAT!**