

NOTICE OF PROPOSED GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Connector April 2018 newsletter

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 227.112, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is hereby seeking comment on Connector April 2018 newsletter [Wis. Stat. ch. 343, 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=OPA162>

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

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State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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County plow crews, emergency responders step up during late-spring blizzard

Joe Starr - April 25

The Wisconsin State Patrol responded to nearly 1,000 traffic incidents statewide during a mid-April blizzard.

The storm, named Evelyn by meteorologists, was called one of the biggest to hit the region in years. While many remained shocked at how a storm this size could strike so late in the season, Marathon County Highway Commission Maintenance Supervisor Randy Ludovic was far from surprised. To him it was just another snow storm they needed to be prepared for.

"It doesn't matter if it's a few inches or a few feet," said Ludovic, adding that whenever a storm hits it's their job to ensure that every mile of highway in Marathon County is kept clear and safe for motorists. From the time the blizzard began ramping up through the following week, Marathon County Maintenance crews ran 35 plow trucks, two Oshkosh trucks and two graders Saturday through Monday from 3 a.m. to 6 p.m. with five plow trucks working the overnights from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. Saturday and Sunday to keep clear the county's nearly 1,500 miles of highway.

A similar situation played out to the east in Brown County where Highway Department Commissioner Paul Fontecchino and his team took on more than 30 inches of snow dumped by the slow-moving storm system. The Brown County Highway Department manages nearly 1,700 highway miles, and highway shoulders were full of snow a day after the system had passed. The next step was to get that snow off the shoulders to unclog storm drains, said Fontecchino.

"If we don't, that snow would melt and have no place to go except onto the road where it will freeze at night."

A big challenge with this storm was rock salt reserves. Being so late in the winter storm season, much of the salt stock was depleted, so rationing was in full effect. Adding to that, the storm's size and duration made it tougher to decide how best to use the scarce rock salt stock.

"We really had to watch salt consumption closely, said Fontecchino. With few reserves in Green Bay to count on, he said they would have had to look as far as Milwaukee if supplies fell too low.



A Brown County plow driver battles blinding snow.



More than 30 inches of snow was dumped on Brown County by the slow-moving storm.

clear, said Fontecchino.

"They still stop at the shop for fuel so they get breaks for rest and food. And they can also stop at a gas station as they need to."

Another positive Fontecchino said came from this experience was that the storm's severity required

The unusual size of this storm tested the limits and resources of county departments throughout northern Wisconsin.

Fontecchino's optimistic approach allowed him to see this event as an opportunity to get a true gauge of how their resources and procedures fared under the most extreme situations. One area he was pleased with was their newly enacted 12-hour shift policy for snow plow drivers. They could have trucks on the roads for longer without having to change out entire shifts every eight hours. The longer plows are on the road during a snow storm the more effective they are at keeping highways

them to use nearly every tool they had, many of which were not used in years.

"When you have a storm this size where you need every last piece of equipment, you quickly learn what works and what needs replacing." Once the weather calms and the roads are cleared, Fontecchino says that he plans to meet with his crew to discuss the experience.

"We want to find out what went well and what we need to work on."

The [Wisconsin DOT contracts](#) with the state's 72 county highway departments to maintain the state's interstates, and federal and state numbered highways. There are 113,000 miles of local streets and county and state highways in Wisconsin, including 11,433 miles or 34,620 lane miles (one lane mile equals a one mile roadway that is 12 feet wide) of state maintained highways.

Wisconsin DOT is thankful for the county highway departments' dedication as well as that of local police and sheriff departments, emergency responders, tow truck drivers and all others who helped keep motorists safe and moving during this unprecedented snow event.

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State Patrol reports of highway incidents responded to statewide during the blizzard

Personal injury crashes	17
Property damage crashes	121
Vehicle runoffs	481
Motorist assists	348

Predictive analytics helps State Patrol place focus on traffic crash trouble spots

Joe Starr - April 19

Beginning this year, the [Wisconsin State Patrol](#) provided its [regional posts](#) with a predictive analytics tool to help reduce traffic crash risks.

Predictive analytics integrates existing technologies to help harness more timely, accurate and consistent data from State Patrol and local law enforcement agency crash reports statewide. The system uses data collected from these reports to help determine where crash risks are highest, helping law enforcement determine where best to deploy.

"The goal is to reduce highway crashes," said Wisconsin State Patrol Colonel Charles Teasdale. "Rather than solely focusing on areas where there is a higher rate of speeding or other traffic violations, predictive analytics gives our posts the information they need to

pinpoint locations where and when crashes are happening so we can create a presence in these areas." Focusing law enforcement in areas experiencing unusually high crash rates helps to discourage speeding and other reckless driving behaviors that may lead to crashes while also reducing incident response times when crashes do occur.

Predictive analytics uses a crash database connected to established mapping tools used by State Patrol. Every time a law enforcement officer transmits a crash report, it is fed into the state's crash



database. This database then shares the information with two existing resources: the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's [Community Maps](#), and State Patrol's [Mobile Architecture for Communications Handling \(MACH\)](#) applications. The State Patrol works with the [UW Traffic Operations and Safety Laboratory](#) to develop and enhance the Community Maps and predictive analytics tools. Community Maps, simply described, is Google Maps with an overlay marking locations where traffic incidents involving fatalities, injuries and crashes have occurred. Community Maps allows law enforcement to filter data by date, time, location, crash type and severity to help decide where best to deploy troopers.

"...predictive analytics gives our posts the information they need to pinpoint locations where and when crashes are happening so we can create a presence in these areas."

—Wisconsin State Patrol Colonel Charles Teasdale

Once on patrol, troopers remotely access predictive analytics through MACH's mapping feature. In MACH, troopers can analyze data to decide where and when their presence would be most effective. If there is an area within their patrol sector with a high crash rate during a specific time, they can adjust plans to patrol that area during that time. Beyond its mapping functionality, MACH allows law enforcement from different agencies to see and communicate with one another. If State Patrol and local police are doing impaired driving enforcement in the same area, they're able to see the locations of all officers and coordinate their efforts.

Integrating predictive analytics with existing tools like MACH and Community Maps further streamline State Patrol systems. Most importantly, it makes law enforcement more efficient by providing easily accessible, real-time data that are available anyplace and at any time.

The introduction of predictive analytics is credited in part to a push in recent years for all Wisconsin law enforcement agencies to submit traffic incident reports electronically. That push has led to the crash database going 100 percent electronic as every law enforcement agency statewide is now connected into the electronic submission system. This is a big change from just a few years ago when many agencies were submitting paper crash reports, which were received and hand keyed into the database. The time elapsed from when these reports were delivered, received and hand keyed into the system could be as long as three months. In addition to the data-entry delays, there was also a potential for keying errors.

Going 100 percent electronic not only allows law enforcement the latest data to work with, it also gives the state's 72 statutorily required county traffic safety commissions current data to use in discussing traffic safety issues. Before going fully electronic with predictive analytics, these commissions, which meet quarterly, may have been looking at data from two quarters back.

"Having current data at traffic safety commission meetings gives members information they can use to find the right solutions to traffic safety problems," said Wisconsin DOT's Bureau of Transportation Safety Program and Policy Chief Randy Romanski. "For example, a commission might look at a stretch of highway where there is a high crash rate and consider a road realignment as a potential solution. But after injecting predictive analytics into the discussion, they may see that many of the crashes involved alcohol or other driver behavior-related factors. This may lead the commission to rethink the issue and work with law enforcement to use high visibility law enforcement deployments to change behavior and reduce crashes, which can be more timely and cost effective than a roadway realignment."

Predictive analytics is still a new tool, so it will be a while before its true effect can be measured. State Patrol continues to monitor how it is being used while considering next steps. Areas being discussed include incorporating additional filters for weather conditions and traffic calming and improving heat maps.

“There are so many factors to consider in any given situation,” said Bureau of Transportation Safety Program and Policy Unit Supervisor Laura Vande Hey. “The hope is that this tool we are developing will help all law enforcement agencies and community leaders make informed data-driven decisions that lead to safer roads in Wisconsin.”

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Queue warning cuts crash risks by giving drivers heads-up of work zone slowdowns

Joe Starr - Updated April 19

Queue warning systems (QWS) give drivers knowledge of highway traffic slowdowns well before they reach the actual backup.

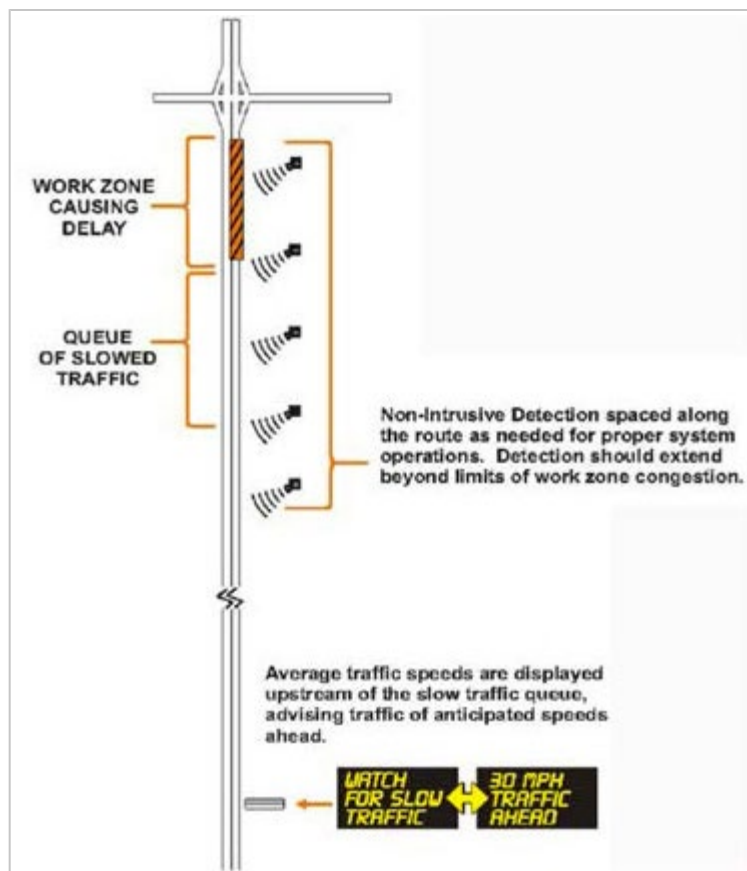


The goal of QWS is to alert motorists of possible traffic backups ahead to help prevent rear-end collisions. The QWS configuration used in Wisconsin is typically a series of portable changeable message signs (PCMS) equipped with sensors. These signs are placed at the start of the lane closure where traffic queues, also known as backups, typically begin. Subsequent PCMSs are then placed every mile upstream from there going as far back as the traffic back-up may extend. For example, the I-39 project in 2017 had 11 PCMSs in the southbound direction to provide adequate coverage on the busy highway. As traffic entering the work zone slows and begins to queue, the sensor detects slowing traffic speeds. Once the sensor detects that traffic is moving at 40 mph or slower, it triggers the next PCMS upstream to send a message to alert drivers of slow or stopped traffic ahead. And if traffic continues to back up, PCMSs farther upstream alert drivers. These warnings are intended to heighten driver awareness and reduce speed ahead of the traffic backup.

Wisconsin started using QWS as part of a [2016 pilot project](#). The technology has since taken hold and seen positive results. A QWS was deployed in 2017 to help improve traffic safety near an I-43 construction zone in Manitowoc County. The highway section served by the QWS saw a 15 percent decrease in crashes and a 63 percent reduction in injury crashes when compared to the same section where construction occurred the previous year.

Plans are already in place for the 2018 construction season to use a QWS along I-39/90/94 in Columbia County. There will also be several hybrid QWSs in southeastern Wisconsin consisting of PCMSs, sensors and a [zipper merge](#) to optimize traffic flow.

Choosing the best use of QWS resources is the job of the Wisconsin Transportation Management Plan decision support system (DSS). The DSS is funded in part by a 2016



Federal Highway Administration grant. The system makes recommendations based on project area crash history, and by observing highway designs, including curves, hills and valleys that may restrict a driver's line of sight downstream. Future lane closures may also factor into the recommendations that are presented for consideration to Wisconsin DOT's project designers and its Bureau of Traffic Operations.

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April Law of the Month reminds motorcyclists they need to be legally licensed to ride

Wisconsin DOT - April 12

Sooner or later spring-like weather will arrive in Wisconsin and when it does motorcycle traffic will increase on Wisconsin roads.



Wisconsin DOT's April [Law of the Month](#) reminds motorcyclists to be properly licensed. Wisconsin law requires all motorcyclists to have a [Class M license](#), which can be done one of two ways:

- Pass a Wisconsin DOT administered motorcycle driving skills test at a [Division of Motor Vehicles](#) service center. Tests are [conducted by appointment](#). Applicants must provide a motorcycle in good working order, wear eye protection and an approved helmet.
- Successfully complete a [WisDOT-approved rider education course](#). For a nominal fee, professional instructors guide riders through classroom and on-the-bike instruction. Students that successfully complete an approved education course can obtain a waiver for the skills test

to obtain their Class M license.

A violation for operating a motorcycle without the proper license costs \$200 along with three demerit points. Visit the [Law of the Month](#) page for more details on this and previous laws of the month.

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37 officers of newly graduated 63rd recruit class join Wisconsin State Patrol ranks

Rob Miller - April 11

Thirty-seven officers entered the [Wisconsin State Patrol](#) ranks during a March 30 graduation ceremony in La Crosse, Wis. Family and friends gathered to watch as the State Patrol's 63rd recruit class was sworn in by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker.

"The primary mission of these brave men and women is to ensure safe travel for Wisconsin families and commerce," said Governor Walker as he thanked the newly sworn officers for their service and commitment to Wisconsin.

The graduation was a culmination of 26 weeks of comprehensive training at the Wisconsin State Patrol Academy at Fort McCoy. Twenty-nine of the officers have been assigned duties as [troopers](#) and eight as [inspectors](#). Troopers generally patrol highways to enforce traffic safety and criminal laws while inspectors help enforce state and federal motor carrier safety regulations that impact large trucks, buses and other commercial motor vehicles.

"We rely on our law enforcement professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during holidays, good and bad weather," said Wisconsin DOT Secretary Dave Ross. "I want to congratulate these recent graduates and recognize that we cannot thank them enough for choosing a career in law enforcement, and keeping the roadways and all of us safe."

Along with enforcing traffic and commercial motor vehicle laws, State Patrol officers fulfill many other roles such as crash reconstruction experts, airplane pilots, dignitary protection, K-9 or motorcycle officers. Last year, State Patrol officers made 245,099 traffic stops, handled 37,763 motorist assists and inspected 37,082 commercial motor vehicles.

"To help ensure the safety of our officers and the citizens they serve, the Wisconsin State Patrol provides its troopers and inspectors some of the most comprehensive training offered in the nation," said Captain Paul Matl, Wisconsin State Patrol Academy commander. The physical and academic training covers traffic and criminal laws, emergency vehicle operations and firearms proficiency, communication skills and crisis management, along with emergency lifesaving skills.





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Free search tool IDs open vehicle safety recalls

Terry Walsh - April 11

Safety on the road starts with safe vehicles. It's easy to find out if a vehicle has an open safety recall and it's important to get the safety-related defect fixed.

In addition to the manufacturer's mailed notification, free online tools are available. The National Highway Traffic Safety Association has a [Vehicle Identification Number search tool](#).

A vehicle's unique 17-character VIN number is located on the car's registration card, a small plate on the driver-side dashboard, or on the driver side door or frame. NHTSA's VIN search tool shows all open vehicle safety recalls that are incomplete spanning the past 15 years.

NHTSA's website also spotlights high-profile recalls, such as the Takata air bag recall, and the process to report and recall safety-related defects.

Wisconsin DMV is another resource and helps consumers buy wisely with the vehicle buyer's guide "[Wise Buys](#)." DMV's Dealer and Agent Section also hears complaints regarding [dealers](#) and [problem used cars](#). Wisconsin DOT's [Field Investigation Unit](#) with offices throughout the state also investigate unlicensed car dealers and reports of [odometer tampering](#).

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As road construction season ramps up, remember that work zone safety is 'everybody's responsibility'

Joe Starr - April 5

In 2017, 2,700 crashes occurred in Wisconsin road construction and maintenance zones with preliminary figures showing 1,067 injuries and six deaths resulting from those crashes.

Inattentive driving and speeding were primary factors in most of these

incidents. The good news is that these and other factors that lead to work zone traffic crashes are preventable, so everybody can take responsibility and do their part to keep work zones safe.

Work Zone Awareness Week – held this year April 9 through 13 – focuses on work zone safety advocacy to help educate drivers on how to avoid behaviors that often lead to work zone crashes, injuries and deaths.

"For the safety of motorists and construction workers, we need all drivers to buckle-up, watch their speed, be patient and stay focused on the road," says Wisconsin DOT's Bureau of Transportation Safety Director David Pabst. "Rear-end collisions are common in work zones, typically caused by drivers going too fast and failing to recognize that traffic ahead has slowed or stopped."

An important reason to slow down and stow the phones when you see work-zone orange – **aside from it being the law** - is that where there are work zones there are work zone workers.

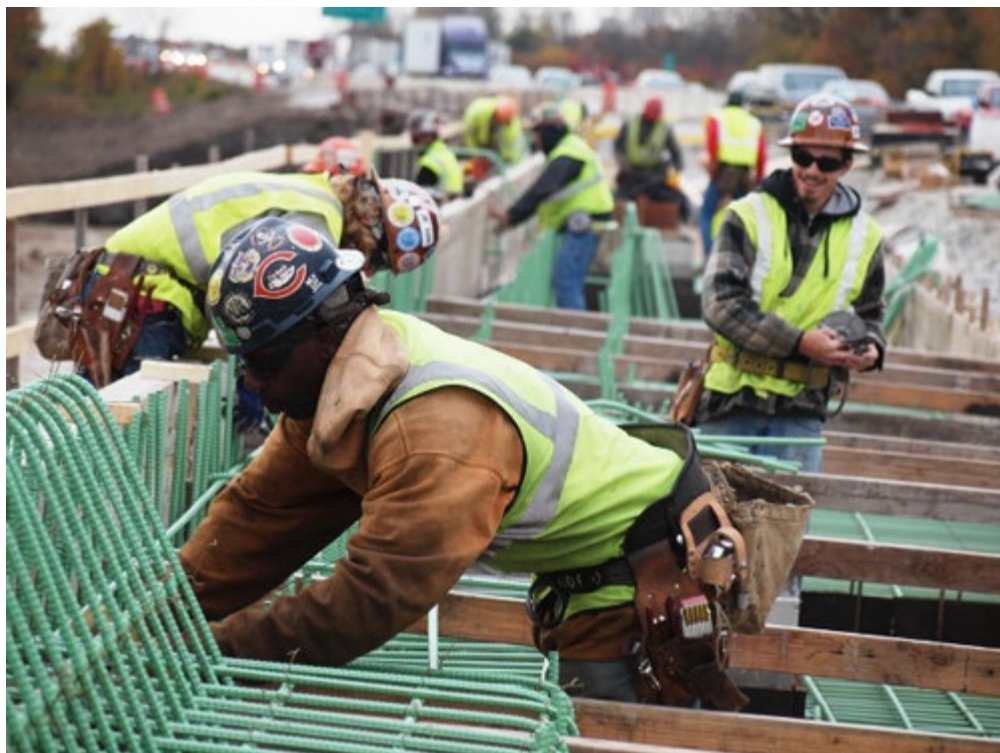
"You may not think about it as you're driving through a work zone, but this is still a workplace and the people working here are just like you and me," says Wisconsin DOT Construction Project Manager Adam Kopp. "They have families and friends who love them and want to see them safe and sound at home every day after work."

"For the safety of motorists and construction workers, we need every driver to buckle-up, watch their speed, be patient and stay focused on the road,"

-- Wisconsin Bureau of Transportation Safety Director David Pabst

Work zone incidents are preventable and safe travels through road work zones can be achieved by becoming familiar with a few simple rules:

Read the signs – Paying attention to the **orange diamond-shaped road signs** and the dynamic message signs help prepare drivers of what's coming ahead. This allows enough time for changing lanes, slowing down and whatever else is needed to prepare before reaching a road construction



area.

Eliminate distractions like eating, drinking, talking on the phone or fiddling with electronic devices. Traveling at 55 mph, a vehicle can cover the length of a football field in less than four seconds. In about the time it takes to look down to read a text or adjust the car radio [it can be too late](#).

Slow down and give extra time for commutes. When work zone hazards are added to already existing highway travel navigation challenges, reaction time and speed become increasingly vital. The faster the speed the less time there is to react and longer it takes to slow down.

Expect the unexpected, including reduced speed limits, sudden traffic lane changes, narrow lanes, sudden stops, and people and equipment working on or near the road. All of this, in addition to the constantly changing landscape of road work zones, makes it increasingly important to give undivided attention to the road ahead. Even drivers who travel the same stretch of road regularly and feel they know where every curve and barrel lies should still treat every drive through a work zone like it is their first.

Don't tailgate. Rear-end collisions are the most common of work zone crashes. Traffic ebbs and flows can lead to abrupt slowdowns that catch drivers following too close off guard. Avoid [tailgating](#) by allowing at least four seconds of space from the vehicle ahead. Following too closely will only irritate the person being tailgated and can result in a citation, which may be doubled when it happens in a work zone.

Be aware. If you don't see workers, that doesn't mean they're not there.

Plan ahead. Leave early or map out an alternate route. Check [511 Wisconsin](#) for the latest road conditions and work zone news.

Follow the law. [Move over or slow down](#), if possible, when you see someone working or flashing lights ahead.



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