

SEE-MORE SAFETY SAYS...

IT'S TIME FOR A



LESSONS LEARNED STOP-SLOW PADDLES

STOP-SLOW paddles are required for most flagging operations because they are highly visible and present a clear, understandable message to drivers. However, a recent accident on a permit project points out the importance of using paddles properly. Otherwise, the message conveyed to the driver can be misleading.

In this situation, a utility was working on the southbound shoulder to set new poles. No lanes were taken, but traffic was being slowed in both directions through the work area. A flagger on each end of the project, on opposite sides of the road, stood on the shoulder with the SLOW paddle facing the direction of oncoming traffic. A motorist traveling south through the project passed the first flagger, but as the vehicle was leaving the work zone, the driver saw the back of the paddle (the STOP face) that was being used to slow the traffic coming from the north. Confused, the driver applied the brakes suddenly and was rear-ended by the vehicle behind.

Because both the STOP and SLOW sides of the paddles were visible to the driver, the message was inconsistent. STOP-SLOW paddles are extremely effective for controlling alternating one-way traffic and in most other situations. However, there may be occasional situations, such as the incident described here, where paddles may not be appropriate. In this case, substituting signal flags for the paddles, and using the standard signal display to slow traffic, may have prevented this accident.

STOP-SLOW paddles are highly effective, and their use is required for most flagging operations. However, when the STOP face may be confusing to drivers in the adjoining lane, changes may be appropriate.