Traffic Control Safety Fatality File



Traffic Control Worker Struck and Killed

A traffic maintenance crew consisting of three workers were tasked with closing the eastbound left lane of a four-lane interstate in preparation of setting up a road construction site within a populous city.

On the night of the incident, the three workers picked up traffic cones from the westbound lanes of the same interstate that had been placed several days before closing the left lane. The employees placed the cones in the beds of the three work trucks they were operating and drove to the left shoulder of the interstate travelling eastbound. Each work truck had operating brake lights, rotating strobe lights, and a 14-light split arrow Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) type-D arrow board mounted on them. The arrows were all flashing to the right, indicating to oncoming traffic the need to merge before the lane ended.

When the workers arrived at the assigned area, the first employee parked his work truck on the left shoulder of the interstate, exited the vehicle and rode with the victim who was operating the second work truck to a second location. The victim then instructed the operator of the third work truck to continue up the interstate. It is unknown the exact distance between the first and second work trucks as well as the distance between the second and third work trucks due to both being moved before emergency services arrived. In an interview with police, the operator of the first work truck noted that there was ‘some distance’ between the trucks. The third co-worker had pulled far enough forward that he was unaware of when the incident occurred.

The victim drove his work truck onto the left shoulder with a portion of the vehicle’s rear protruding into the left lane. After the victim parked, he and his co-worker both exited the vehicle with the purpose of ‘staging the cones’. The cones would be placed on the left shoulder, spaced at distances of every other white lane marker. It was the intention of the workers to have the cones in position so that at 9:00 p.m. later that night, when the construction contractor would instruct the workers to close the lane, the employees would then move the cones from the shoulder into the left lane closing it to traffic.

As the victim’s co-worker was standing on the driver side of the truck, fully on the shoulder, the victim walked around to the rear passenger side of the truck.

As he was preparing to brief the co-worker on their expected work activities, the victim was struck from behind by a compact SUV that was unable to merge into the middle lane in time to avoid the crash. The victim was crushed between the SUV and his work truck and then pushed under the work-truck.

When law enforcement officers arrived, they found the victim under the work truck and pulled the truck forward. Once the truck was moved, the officers observed that the victim had severe injuries to both legs. One of the officers retrieved a tourniquet and applied it to one of the victim’s legs but did not have a second tourniquet. When emergency services arrived at the scene five minutes later, the employee had succumbed to his injuries.