

EQUIPMENT OPERATOR AND MECHANIC TRAINING PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has training programs for equipment operators and for mechanics. The following is a brief description of the basic characteristics of these programs.

EQUIPMENT OPERATOR

The goal of the Operator Training Program is to assure:

- Efficient operation of the equipment for the purpose intended;
- Extend vehicle service life and value;
- Reduce the frequency and severity of accidents;
- Lower operating cost of the equipment; and
- Instill pride and professionalism in equipment operators.

The program is guided by a committee of rank-and-file and management employees. The committee is tasked with developing policies and procedures for executive approval and to function as a sounding board for new training initiatives.

The focal points of the Department's operator training program are its three regional training sites. Three to four hundred students can be trained per year at these sites. Training and certification on dump trucks, loaders, graders, backhoes, and excavators have been identified as "CORE" equipment. These are (1) essential to many maintenance operations, (2) are costly and complex in nature, and (3) require extensive training for proficiency and safety awareness. As such, the

training on these equipment is highly structured, demanding and must be completed at a regional training facility.

The total staff for these three sites are three site administrators and 12 operator instructors. Equipment inventory includes 13 dump trucks, nine front-end loaders, two hydraulic truck mounted excavators, five backhoes and four graders.

All training and certification on non"CORE" units, i.e., rollers, oil distributors, stone chippers, etc., also require a structured program and are taught at a field operation within each District. To help consistency, a Department publication of standard course curriculum and lesson plans are used to guide field operators.

MECHANIC TRAINING PROGRAM

PennDOT employs 500 mechanics per year. The turnover rate is approximately 5% or 25 new mechanics per year. To train mechanics, the Department uses Original Equipment Manufacturer training courses required in new equipment specifications, conducts local courses using selected Department mechanics as instructors and operates a centralized three week training program for all new mechanics.

The formalized new mechanic training is conducted by Department mechanics trained as instructors. This course is offered quarterly and is three weeks in length. New mechanics are required to attend the course and pass a hands-on and written test within their 6-month probationary period. The program was started in January of 1992 and has to date trained 106 mechanics.