

Tailgate Safety Talks



Tailgate safety talks, or any brief safety review by another name, should be in your manager's toolkit, whether you are a director of public works, a street superintendent, a crew leader or any other leader of personnel. However, we know that you often don't have the time to pull together the materials to lead a talk and materials found online have mixed reviews. The Training Resources Workgroup of the National LTAP Association (NLTAPA) has developed Tailgate Safety Briefing Packages for you to use in periodic safety talks with your crews and the Delaware T²/LTAP Center, being part of NLTAPA, can access these for your use.

Who is LTAP?

There is a Local Technical Assistance Program, LTAP, in each state and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. In some states, they are known as T² Centers (geek speech for Technology Transfer). We are funded through the federal Highway Bill and state Department of Transportation matching funds and are usually based at either the state DOT or a university. Simply put, the Federal Highway Administration charges us to get to know our local transportation agencies, listen to their challenges, and help them however we can through training, technical assistance, and technology transfer. The truth is that we learn as much from you, the local agencies, as you learn from us, and it is genuinely a collaborative arrangement geared towards sharing of innovations, best practices, successes, failures, and new technologies so that we can all work more efficiently, provide the best possible service to the public, and ensure the greatest safety for our public employees. If you are reading this eNewsletter article, you already know the Delaware T²/LTAP Center. The Centers across the country work together through NLTAPA to develop knowledge and materials to assist our local agencies in each state.



Tailgate Safety Talks

Going by many different names, these are a staple of safety programs with public works agencies across the country, as well as safety-conscious contractors. They can take place as often as you find helpful. They can be held weekly or monthly or in connection with a new activity or season. They are intended to be short and focused so that, over time and together with your existing practices and policies, they help build a culture of safety within your crews. As a service to our local agencies, our intent is to provide supervisors with packages of materials, targeted towards a broad array of public works equipment and practices, that will make it easy for you to carry out these important talks.

The idea of a tailgate safety talk is to take a discrete activity, practice, or piece of equipment and drill into it quickly in a way that is relevant to what your crews are doing or are likely to encounter. Typically, we will talk about the dangers or risks, some best safety practices, perhaps some statistics, and try to relate case studies from OSHA or elsewhere.

You can carry out tailgate safety talks however you find best, but some guidelines to consider include:

- Hold talks on a regular basis – weekly or monthly – so crews get used to them and see them as a regular part of the job and see them as a resource for their protection.
 - Keep them short – they are focused on a specific, limited topic, so they needn't be more than 10-15 minutes long.
 - Time them right so they don't "interfere" with the work – the beginning of a work shift is a great time, but they can also be part of a "lunch and learn" session.
 - Refreshments – always a good idea if you can make it happen. If it's a morning briefing, coffee and pastries will get their attention. If it's a lunchtime thing, you can bring in sandwiches or pizza.
 - Include props when you can. If the topic is ladders have one or more at the ready to point to or with which to demonstrate. If it's fall protection, have a harness on hand.
 - Leave time for questions and encourage interaction.
 - Keep it light – these safety topics are serious business, but the talks should be light-hearted and presented positively. They are not the place to single out crew members about incidents in the past (although you can certainly make reference to them in a non-critical way).
 - Incorporate your agency's policies and the specific challenges of your equipment, geography, climate, personnel policies, safety requirements, and so on.
 - Later...lead by example. If your crew members see you practicing what they heard from you during the talk, it can be a powerful tool. However, when you fail to practice what you preached, it can quickly undermine your safety culture.



What's in a Tailgate Safety Package?

At this time, some topics have extensive materials available and some are very brief. But remember, even where the topic is highly developed with a lot of materials, you only need to use as much as you find useful for your crew. For a typical topic, you will find some or all of the following:

- Supervisor notes – designed for you to administer the session, with suggested points to cover, questions to pose, related topics that you can cover in future talks, and resources for those who want to dig a bit deeper.
 - Handouts – you can print these out in color or black and white for the crew members to follow along and refer to later.
 - Posters – these will often be in 8½”x14” (legal size) and 11”x17” (ledger size) and can be printed in color or black and white to be posted at appropriate places in the shop and other work places.
 - Cards – these can be printed in black and white, cut to size, and laminated to hand out to crew members to carry in their equipment with them.
 - Sign in sheets. More than to just show active participation in safety training by your employees, these can also be used as positive documentation of your agency’s commitment to safety should an accident occur.

Our goal is to supply you with everything but the tailgate!

Please give us feedback

Remember, this is a collaborative relationship and we learn from you, too.



- If you add to these materials, we’d love to see what you come up with so we can improve the series, so please share them back with us (we’ll find creative ways to credit you).
- Tell us if we did a good job or even a poor job (we love praise, but we take criticism well, too).
- Tell us how to improve – specific to a package or in general.
- Tell us the topics you’d like us to target in future packages.
- Provide feedback to Matt Carter, co-chair, NLTAPA Training Workgroup, matheu@udel.edu.

What topics are available?

The topic list is expanding quickly. The topics listed below are available as of July 2019, but we expect the list to grow substantially and we will update you periodically. If you see a topic of interest, contact our Municipal Engineering Circuit Rider, Matt Carter, at matheu@udel.edu and he will retrieve the materials from the library for you to use with your crews.

How to Give a Tailgate Talk
 Tailgate Talks How To
 Backing Safety

Backing Trouble
 Bee Sting
 Berm Maintenance

Blood Safety	Ladder Safety
Body Heat	Lightning Safety
Brush Chippers	Lyme Disease
Brush Vegetation	Mower Safety
Carbon Monoxide Safety	Portable Generator
Chainsaw Safety	Prevent Poison Ivy
Cold Weather Driving	Read the Signs
Cold Weather Precautions	Riding Mower Safety
Cold Weather Slips	Right-of-Way Mowing
Compressed Air Safety	Roadside Mowing Tips
Cutting Brush	Safe Installation of Drainage Pipe
Cutting Tool Safety	Smoke Detectors
Cutting Tools	Staying Fit for Snow Fighting
Drain Pipe Install	String Trimmer Safety
Driver Operator Safety	Sun Induced Burns
Electrical Safety	Teamwork Prevents Accidents
Fire Safety	Tractor PTOs and Drivelines
Good Housekeeping	Tree Brush Trimming
Hand Tool Safety	Tree Felling Safety
Hazards of Solvents	Trench Safety
Hearing Protection	Unsafe Equipment
Heavy Equipment	Walk-Behind Mower Safety
Heavy Equipment Hazards	Working Along the Roadway
High Visibility Safety Apparel	Working Near Power Lines
Installation of Cable Clips Safely	Workplace Electrical Practices

We hope these materials help make it easier for you to develop or maintain a strong safety culture in your agency so that your crews will be as safe as they can be in what is by its nature a dangerous business. Remember, safety is no accident.