

# Protecting Vital Assets

**S**everal websites devoted to human resources offer checklists and other guidance for what to do when an employee dies on the job. Most are guilty of one key oversight. While the lists usually begin with calling 911, contacting the Occupational Safety & Health Administration, dealing with the media, keeping the business operating and even tips on establishing scholarship funds and remembering anniversaries, they lack any advice about what to say to a family that has lost someone in a workplace accident.

During our careers in the transportation construction industry, we've been to funerals for company employees and industry colleagues.



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We have listened to moms and dads, grandparents and siblings share stories about their loved ones. Sometimes there is just not much you can say to console them, but we come away from these events with a steely resolve and renewed commitment that such incidents should never happen again.

That's why we are proud to have helped launch the new Safety Certification for Transportation Project Professionals program.

Anchored by a comprehensive website, [puttingsafetyfirst.org](http://puttingsafetyfirst.org), the certification program's goal is to boost significantly the hazard-awareness and risk-management skills of all transportation project professionals who are in positions of influence—through day-to-day oversight, from project inception through completion—to curtail the number of safety breakdowns in which someone is injured or killed.

What is driving the program? Transportation construction is a

dangerous business. According to Federal Highway Administration data, nearly 50,000 people per year die or are injured in and around U.S. transportation infrastructure projects. More than 125 of those killed are workers, and another 15,000 workers sustain injuries. In addition to the human toll, the economic costs of worker fatalities and injuries amount to billions of dollars annually.

We believe these numbers are too high. The American Road & Transportation Builders Association's foundation is administering the certification program. To help in this effort, the foundation has engaged Professional Testing Inc. (PTI), an internationally recognized consulting firm specializing in helping industries and government agencies to develop and manage effective, fair, valid, reliable and legally defensible assessment and evaluation services.

The program is not a "certificate course" or self-certification program. With PTI's help, it has been designed to meet the rigorous protocols required for accreditation by the American National Standards Institute and the International Organization for Standardization's "ISO/IEC 17024: Conformity Assessment: General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons."

A crew of top safety professionals who are subject-matter experts from leading industry firms, public agen-

cies and academia has devoted months to shaping the program's scope and crafting the questions for the certification exam.

The 2.5-hour test has up to 120 multiple-choice questions. The test questions probe a person's knowledge about assessing project risks, creating safety plans, implementing and conducting ongoing evaluations of site-specific operational safety plans and conducting incident investigations. The exam is open to all transportation project workers, supervisors, foremen, managers, designers, planners, owners, equipment operators, manufacturers and materials suppliers who meet the eligibility requirements. ARTBA's foundation also has established an online learning center that offers courses to help industry professionals prepare for the exam. Earning the program credential shows employers and peers that certified individuals have core safety competencies.

In the end, the more trained eyes we have on transportation project sites, the safer those sites will be. It can mean fewer fatalities and injuries, fewer insurance claims and lower premiums, and increased productivity. The certification is good for three years. We invite you to join us by having 20 key people at your firm sit for the test in 2017 and every year after. Protecting the safety of the industry's vital assets—its employees—and the motoring public is our collective responsibility. Together, let's strive to make transportation project sites zero-fatality and zero-injury zones. ■

*Co-chairs of the Safety Certification for Transportation Project Professionals, Ross Myers and David Walls are chief executives of contractors Allan Myers and Austin Industries, respectively. They can be reached via ARTBA at 202-289-4434.*

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