



ARE YOU PREPARED?

By Ted Eggebraaten, SD LTAP Technical Assistance Provider

Spring flooding, heavy rains or other disasters can occur in any county, city, or township. If you had flooding in many locations, for example, how many roads would you be able to close properly? How many Type III barricades and road closure signs does your agency have on hand?

This is a problem in South Dakota and is something highway superintendents, street superintendents and townships supervisors need to address.

Proper closure usually requires blocking access to areas that are dangerous to the traveling public to protect your governmental unit from any liability problems that may occur. However, you may have to allow access for local traffic beyond a closed intersection. In this case, warning should be given at the nearest intersection and complete closure made at the point of danger.

We have seen many hazardous situations where roads are not properly closed and this could be a major liability problem to a local agency. To prevent problems you must be aware of the standards that exist for road closure.



A situation that requires emergency road closure to ensure public safety.



A sign trailer fabricated by Brookings County Highway Department which has Type III barricades and signs loaded and ready for quick response to emergency road closings.

The manual that sets standards for all traffic control is the 2003 edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Section 6F.63 of the MUTCD provides guidance on Type I, II or III Barricades and where they should be used. Another good handbook is the South Dakota Local Government Roads

Signing Reference, 2004 edition, Section 6F.60, pages A-15 through A-19. These two manuals will give you the proper signing methods and guidance for proper closures.

We strongly suggest you contact the proper authorities when a road is closed. This will help in re-routing emergency vehicles around these sites. When working as a highway superintendent in Brookings County, I always contacted the sheriff's office and they in turn informed the emergency units of the closures. Also, keep a good log of when the road was closed and note the date and time when it was re-opened for public travel. If you keep good records and you have any incidents such as barricade removal by vandals, you have records to protect you and your department. If you have a digital camera, dated pictures of the closures are certainly beneficial.

Many counties and townships in South Dakota have had to close roads due to spring run off and major flooding along rivers and many small tributaries. Many governmental units do not have enough barricades to complete the closures. It's a good idea to contact other governmental units in your area to see if you could use their signs and barricades in case of disasters. Make a list of how many you can borrow and this will help determine the number you need in the future. Funding is a problem for many of you and sharing signs and barricades is a way of working together.

Another way to get the signs you need is to rent signs from sign contractors throughout the state.

The cost in May 2009 for a complete Type III barricade is about \$218 and includes a 48"X20" road Closed sign. The 30"X30" advance warning signs are \$32 each.

Consider: Is this cost excessive if a life is lost or having a huge liability case to proceed through our court system? These are some of the issues we deal with on a day to day basis — ***Are You Prepared?***



A very high risk situation requiring a rapid response.