

KYTC Newsletter

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Volume 71



SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

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Gov. Andy Beshear Announces Brent Spence Bridge Emergency Repair Named a 'National Project of the Year' by American Society of Highway Engineers

Gov. Andy Beshear today announced that the emergency repair of the Brent Spence Bridge in northern Kentucky following a truck crash and fire has been selected the 2021 National Project of the Year Under \$20 Million by the American Society of Highway Engineers (ASHE).

It is the fourth major award for engineering achievement to be accorded to the project, which involved repairing and reopening the bridge that carries Interstates 71 and 75 over the Ohio River between Covington and Cincinnati. It is one of the most important commercial corridors in the eastern United States, which heightened the urgency of the project.

The project was nominated and co-sponsored by the Derby City and Bluegrass Sections of ASHE. Prior to the national award, it swept sectional awards and the Great Lakes Region ASHE Transportation Improvement Award in the category of Construction Cost \$5 million and Under.

The project also has received national awards from the American Council of Engineering Companies, the American Public Works Association and Engineering News-Record.

The Brent Spence Bridge, which carries 160,000 vehicles per day, was abruptly closed when two semitrailers collided and burned early on the morning of Nov. 11, 2020.

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) quickly assembled a project team that included consulting engineers from Michael Baker International, Stantec, Palmer and Burgess & Niple, and a construction contractor, Kokosing Construction Co.

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Use Toolbox Talks to Improve Worker Safety During the Labor Shortage

Since President Joe Biden signed the \$1 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in November 2021, construction demand has increased. The labor force, however, has not: 92% of contractors reported moderate to high levels of difficulty recruiting skilled labor in Q3 2021, up from 88% in Q2.

When paired with high construction demand, the skilled labor shortage has increased workplace pressures on remaining industry veterans. And with fewer skilled workers, construction companies have had to rely on a less-skilled workforce—a fact that should concern safety-minded contractors. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly one-third of nonfatal construction-related injuries occur among workers with under a year's experience.

Given this reality, contractors need to focus on providing robust workplace safety education. One effective method can be regular safety briefs called "toolbox talks."

The Construction Labor Shortage Threatens Workplace Safety

The construction industry's labor shortage has been a persistent problem since the Great Recession. But in Q3 2021, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Commercial Construction Index (CCI) painted a particularly grim picture. Of the contractors struggling to recruit skilled workers:

- Seventy-three percent find it difficult to meet project schedule requirements.
- Seventy-one percent are demanding more of their skilled workers.
- Ninety-three percent expect the labor shortage to persist or worsen over the next six months.

These numbers describe a perfect storm for more frequent on-site injuries. When overworked and understaffed crews feel pressured to stay on schedule, they might cut corners. Those decisions can seriously impact their safety.

Fortunately, contractors recognize this problem—workplace safety is their second-highest concern, according to last quarter's CCI.

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About The KYTC

The goal of the DBE Supportive Services Program is to increase the number of DBEs participating on KYTC contracts and facilitate the opportunity for DBEs to obtain contracts. The services are designed to:

- Assist established construction firms to move them from bidding as a subcontractor to bidding as a Prime Contractor to produce sound bids.
- Provide access to training increases DBE expertise in handling of daily business operations.



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