



Today's Date: Tuesday, November 30, 2010

District: 05 – Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties

Contact: Susana Z. Cruz (bilingual) or Colin Jones

Phone: (805) 549-3138 or (805) 549-3189

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BALSI BEAM PROTECTS CENTRAL COAST HIGHWAY WORKERS

CENTRAL COAST--When a barrier or shadow vehicle is not enough to protect highway workers, what's next? The Balsi Beam! It's the newest mobile roadwork protection system that is carried on a tractor-trailer and specifically intended to enhance worker safety when performing roadway repairs in highway work zones.

The Balsi Beam Trailer was developed in 2003 after two Bay Area highway workers were hit by an impaired driver whose car penetrated a work zone. One of the men, Mark Balsi, lost a leg in the accident.

Each side of the trailer consists of high-strength steel box beams that are capable of extending horizontally. Using hydraulic power, each beam can then rotate to either side, depending on which side of the road a protective barrier is needed. The trailer then extends to provide secure work zone of up to 30 feet. The trailer beams act as a rigid physical barrier to deflect traffic away from maintenance workers, in essence forming what Caltrans calls "shields of steel."

In a typical work zone, shadow trucks are placed in front and back of the work zone but there is no protection for workers from vehicles entering from the side. Use of the Balsi Beam system lengthens out the area where workers are protected, allowing them to complete repairs safely.

"We've made great efforts too improve worker safety, through the years developing barriers and shadow vehicles to provide protection from errant vehicles that penetrate work zones. We are very excited that the Balsi Beam Trailer so far provides the most optimal protection for our hard-working maintenance crews," remarked Rich Krumholz, District 5 Director.

The prototype device cost about \$217,000 to build but its price is expected to drop significantly when other models are produced. This cost is insignificant when compared to the loss of life or traumatic injury that highway workers are exposed to on the job. There are currently five models statewide, one in our central coast district. It was recently deployed on the Hwy. 101/Salinas River Bridge in King City for guardrail repair.

For more information on the history of the Balsi Beam Trailer, visit the website:
<http://cap1.dot.ca.gov/DevelopDeploy/php/drilldown.php?id=65> **(SEE PHOTOS INCLUDED)**



