

Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 209

Today I want to focus on windscreen damage due to falling objects from overbridges. I recently had my windscreen cracked by an object falling from the pedestrian overbridge on the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway (CRH) at Don Miguel Road (near Courts). And last week it happened again, but this time on the Solomon Hochoy Highway at the pedestrian overbridge near Seereeram, and thankfully no damage was done.

I have never seen anybody cleaning road or pedestrian bridges. And now we have so many pedestrian overbridges, at least five on the Uriah Butler Highway (UBH)/Solomon Hochoy Highway (SHH) (there used to be an un-used one near the Caroni River but it was demolished a few years ago); at least four on the CRH; one on Lady Young Road; two on Western Main Road (WMR), including a new one at Westmoorings; and, one on the Diego Martin Highway.

There are several road overbridges and overpasses, including the recent one at the UBH/CRH intersection. A brand new overpass is about to be opened on the CRH near Aranguez. There are road overbridges on the CRH at Barataria and at NP in Sea Lots. There is an overpass on the Audrey Jeffers Highway at Cocorite (WMR), and the WMR is an overbridge at the Diego Martin Highway. There are ten overbridges/overpasses on the SHH, and the SHH is an overbridge/overpass for five roads along its route.

Adequate cleaning and maintenance of these vehicle and pedestrian overbridges/overpasses are critical in order to minimize spillage of objects and other potentially hazardous materials on persons and vehicles below.

The literature gives some guidelines for overbridge/overpass

cleaning and maintenance as follows:

1. Set up proper traffic control.
2. Take adequate measures in maintenance activities to ensure that paint and other hazardous material are not spilled.
2. Keep non-hazardous materials and debris from falling from the bridge structure.
4. Temporarily block deck drains over streams and scuppers over streams when pressure washing, sandblasting, or scraping structures, to route water off deck and into a safe collection facility. Stage the operation to capture and collect as much debris as possible. Transport the waste back to a Maintenance facility or approved storage site.
5. Remove large debris from bridge decks with sweeper or shovel. Scrape other material by hand before being collected or removed, prior to pressure washing.
6. Collect broken or damaged treated bridge pier fender posts and bring them back to a Maintenance facility. Dispose of the posts according to approved waste disposal practices.

In addition, pedestrians should be warned not to have objects held carelessly while crossing these structures, such as coins in their hands, in order to minimize the likelihood of these items falling onto passing vehicles below. This can be extremely dangerous to fast moving vehicles. In fact, there should be a goal to completely enclose all pedestrian overbridges so that no small objects are allowed to fall onto the roadway below.

How often these cleaning and maintenance activities should be undertaken would be determined by the Highways Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport, but inspections should be done regularly.

The personnel and tools to be used must be carefully considered, with safety for both operators and

the other road users being of primary concern. In other words, the CEPEP method of weed-wacker operations and two persons holding a curtain at the side of the road is not considered appropriate.

I feel certain that implementation of these measures could result in a reduction in insurance cover charges for windscreen damage, and more importantly, would assist reducing traffic crashes.

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