

Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Women’s History Month by spotlighting some amazing women in our department .



Employee Spotlight: Lea Ann Whitney, CSP

TDOT Safety Manager, HQ Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) Division

She loves camping, hiking, jogging, singing in choir at church, reading, spending time with her family and pets.

“If we cannot end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.” John F. Kennedy

Joined TDOT Family April 2018

What does Women’s History Month mean to you and why?

Strong, intelligent and capable women have existed throughout the history of this country and this world. I appreciate celebrating these women who sacrificed, influenced change and paved the way for all women that come after them.

What had the biggest influence on your career?

As a child, my Dad worked at a chemical plant. He always preached about wearing our seatbelts and he always wore safety glasses and boots when doing yard work. I didn’t understand until I was older that he was a champion for safety at work for his 33 year career. I realize I was influenced about safety from an early age but my decision to enter into the safety industry began with working on a manufacturing assembly line during my undergraduate studies in college. I saw first-hand the workplace hazards that cause serious injuries. I decided to further my education and become a Safety Professional. The woman who influenced me to go into this career path was my very successful aunt who is currently a Certified Safety Professional and had graduated from the same program. My passion is to make sure every employee goes home safely to their families each day. Workplace injuries not only affect the injured worker, but affects their love ones.

The TDOT EPIC initiative was launched recently, how do you see your role as empowering people and influencing the culture?

As a Safety Manager, I am constantly in an “influencer” type of position. To be successful I have to understand what motivates our fellow TDOT members to work safely. Being a good listener first, as well as sharing my technical knowledge about safety and my customer focus will help empower our fellow employees be the best and the safest they can be.

How do you suggest we create a workforce that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion?

The HQ OHS Division most recently read a book by Brene Brown called “Daring to Lead”. Ms. Brown states, “We must learn how to lean into our vulnerability, stay curious, and practice courage.” If we all embraced these elements with one another at work, we could build, support and sustain a diverse and inclusive workforce here at TDOT.