Pavement quality indicator is an instant success

Contractors put non-nuclear gauge to work on quality acceptance jobs

Achieving strict contractor quality assurance numbers in Indiana is a little less of a challenge now for Milestone Contractors L.P., Indianapolis, since the company gave the pavement quality indicator (PQI) a non-nuclear density gauge from TransTech Systems, Latham, N.Y., a try. Because the tool has become an instant successs with the contractor, it is used in conjunction with the state specified nuclear density gauge to measure density on quality acceptance (QA) jobs, says Brad Cruea, Milestone's senior QA manager in Indianapolis. Cruea likes the PQI because at 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) it is lightweight and easy to handle. His crew has had it for a few months, and has been using it chiefly on highway jobs where QA numbers factor into the pay. "The state of Indiana only recognizes the nuclear density gauge right now for quality acceptance," says Cruea. "We can control our mixes with any (tool), but as far as being paid (is concerned), we're paid by nuclear gauge (readings) or core (results), depending on the job location, traffic counts and ESALs."

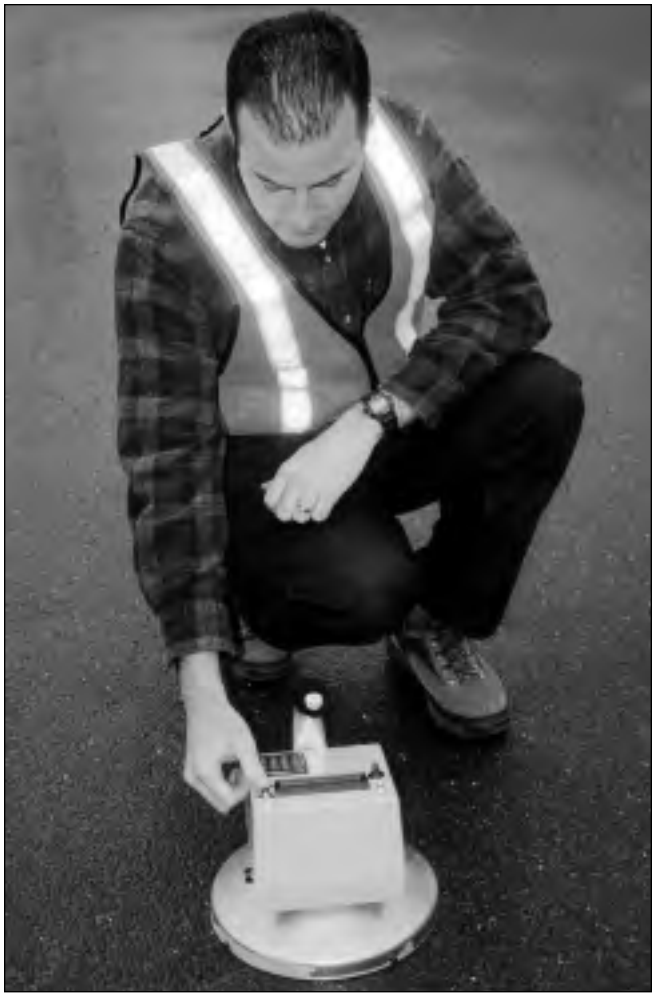
On contractor acceptance jobs, the Indiana department of transportation (DOT) has asked contractors to use the PQI with nuclear testing to develop background data to support preliminary information they've gained from tests in New York, he says. "The Indiana DOT bought one to use and they're pretty good about asking the contractor for input too. We're trying to help get it accepted in Indiana also."

Right now the PQI has to be calibrated to a known density, and that's going to have to come from a core or a nuclear gauge reading, Cruea explains. Most companies doing hot mix asphalt construction have nuclear gauges anyway, so to get the PQI calibrated will require the use of the nuclear gauge the first day or first half day, he says. "The PQI is not adapted to be a standalone (tool), but it could be, maybe by the end of the year," he adds.

Using the PQI, says Cruea, requires minimal instruction. Milestone was introduced to the non-nuclear density gauge in a short demonstration at a recent state asphalt paving association meeting. "When they sent it to us three months later it took about 45 minutes going through the manual and we were able to turn it on and run it. It involves a very simple setup," he adds.

To run the unit, the operator places it on the newly finished mat and takes a density reading. The PQI has several settings, and takes only 5 seconds for each reading, says Cruea. In the continuous mode the operator puts it down for a constant reading. "You can scoot it around the mat. It saves a lot of time, and where I find that advantageous is during test strips when we need to get the mix compacted before it cools down too quickly. You can set the PQI down and get instantaneous readings."

Cruea says this season Milestone is targeting the density gauge for use in high-production interstate work. They'll have the nuclear gauge on the site, take side-by-side sampling with the PQI gauge and compare the numbers for both to core results. ▌



TransTech Systems' pavement quality indicator

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