

14th Annual National Work Zone Awareness Week
April 15-19, 2013

Work Zone Safety: We're All In This Together

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Work Zone Fact Sheet

What is National Work Zone Awareness Week?

National Work Zone Awareness Week is an annual campaign held to encourage safe driving and working at highway construction sites, and to bring national attention to motorist and worker safety and mobility issues in work zones. Local, state, and federal transportation officials observe it in April, the start of highway construction season across most of the country. The national theme for 2013 is, "Work Zone Safety: We're All in This Together."

Why is Work Zone Safety Important?

- There were 587 traffic-related fatalities in work zones in 2011
- There were more than 37,000 injuries in work zones during 2010
- Nearly two people are killed and 101 are injured every day in highway work zones
- An average of four people are injured in a work zone every hour
- More than four out of five work zone traffic fatalities are drivers or passengers

Work zones can present an unfamiliar situation to drivers. Changes in traffic patterns, closed or narrowed lanes, and the presence of construction equipment and personnel can cause issues for motorists as they travel through work zones. While work zone fatalities have declined significantly from a high of 1186 in 2002, more remains to be done to save lives and prevent injury.

Who Is Responsible for Work Zone Safety and Mobility?

As highlighted by this year's theme, *we are all responsible for keeping work zones safe.*

- **Drivers, bikers, motorcyclists, and pedestrians** have the responsibility to always be alert, obey the traffic laws and signs, and pay attention to their surroundings. They must be attentive to changing conditions and exercise caution when they approach and travel through a work zone.
- **Passengers** should always buckle up and act responsibly.
- **Project planners, designers, and construction/maintenance/utility workers** have responsibility to make sure the work zone is designed and operating properly -- with safety and mobility in mind. Safe and efficient work zones begin with proper planning, design, and implementation.
- **Public safety agencies** have the responsibility of responding to and securing crash locations and enforcing traffic laws.
- **Local communities, and county and state governments** need to allocate funding for safe roads and increase public awareness about work zone safety.
- **Police and the courts** have the responsibility to make sure that the traffic and work zone laws are enforced.

Everyone should take responsibility for making work zones work better. Careful attention should be paid to actions that have the potential to impact the safety of everyone involved.

Many drivers would be surprised to find out that *each year most work zone fatalities - approximately 85 - 90% - are motorists and their occupants, and 10 - 15% of fatalities are workers and other non-motorized users such as pedestrians and bicyclists.* The driver plays a key role in making work zones safer for everyone, especially themselves.

Driver-related factors that affect work zone crashes include speeding, distractions such as cell phones, texting, and radios, inattentive driving, and aggressive driving. The main type of work zone crash is a rear-end collision, and adequate following distance is important in avoiding such crashes. When motorists are alert, observe signs, maintain the posted speed limit, and pay attention to traffic patterns, the safety of everyone is enhanced.

10 Tips for Driving in Work Zones

By driving safely in work zones, motorists can help to make sure everyone gets home safely.

- **Expect The Unexpected.** Things may change overnight. Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be closed, narrowed, or shifted, and people may be working on or near the road.
- **Don't Speed.** Speeding is one of the major causes of work zone crashes; obey posted speed limits.
- **Don't tailgate.** Keep a safe distance between you and the car ahead of you and the construction workers and their equipment. Rear-end collisions account for 30% of work zone crashes.
- **Obey Road Crew Flaggers and Pay Attention To The Signs.** The flagger knows what is best for moving traffic safely in the work zone. The warning signs are there to help you and other drivers move safely through the work zone.
- **Stay Alert And Minimize Distractions.** Dedicate your full attention to the roadway and avoid changing radio stations or using cell phones and other electronic devices while approaching and driving in a work zone.
- **Keep Up With The Traffic Flow.** Do not slow down to "gawk" at road work.
- **Know Before You Go.** Check radio, TV and websites for traffic information and schedule enough time to drive safely. Expect delays and leave early so you can reach your destination on time.
- **Be Patient and Stay Calm.** Work zones aren't there to personally inconvenience you. Remember, the work zone crew members are working to improve the road and make your future drive better.
- **Wear your seatbelt.** It is your best defense in a crash.
- **Remember - Dads, Sons, Brothers, Moms, Sisters, and Daughters Work HERE!**

What is the FHWA Doing to increase safety for younger drivers?

To help younger drivers navigate work zones, FHWA and the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) worked together to develop a campaign about work zones that is oriented specifically to new drivers. This campaign, called "Turning Point", was formulated to make new drivers aware of work zone hazards and provide them with guidance on safely negotiating work zone situations. More information about this campaign is available at www.WorkZoneDriver.org.

Distracted driving can be a major challenge for all drivers, including inexperienced younger drivers. Distracted driving is any non-driving activity a person engages in that has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving and increase the risk of crashing.

- Approximately 6,000 deaths and a half a million injuries are caused by distracted drivers every year.
- While teenagers are texting, they spend about 10 percent of the time outside the driving lane they're supposed to be in.
- Talking on a cell phone while driving can make a younger driver's reaction time as slow as that of a 70 year-old.
- Answering a text takes away your attention for about five seconds, which is enough time to travel the length of a football field

Additional Tips Especially for Younger Drivers

In addition to the above driving tips for all drivers, here are some additional tips especially for younger drivers.

- **Practice, practice, practice.** Before you get your license, ask your parents to practice driving through a work zone. It helps with getting familiar about work zone speeds and changes in the roadway.
- **Avoid distractions** such as changing radio stations, using your iPod, texting or talking on your cell phone while driving.
- **Don't assume you know the work zone.** Be alert for changes. There may be big changes between the last time you drove through the work zone and the next time you drive through the work zone.
- **Be visible.** Turn on your car's headlights so construction zone workers can more easily see your vehicle.
- **Be calm and patient.** Don't change lanes all the time to get through traffic faster. Arriving safely at your destination is the most important thing you do

Exposure to Work Zones and Related Delays

Our aging U.S. highway system requires reconstruction, rehabilitation, and maintenance in order to provide users with a safe and efficient infrastructure. This means more work zones. A growing portion of this work is rehabilitating and reconstructing existing infrastructure, while these same roads continue to carry a high volume of traffic. Highway construction projects may add a few minutes to a commute, but those projects are intended to improve highway conditions and promote safer travel for everyone.

In addition to the work zone related fatalities and injuries experienced on our highways, work zones on our freeways are estimated to account for nearly one-quarter of all non-recurring delay. These delays can happen at any time as a result of slowed or stopped traffic due to work zone activities, and it is important for drivers to pay attention when approaching and while driving through a work zone to minimize the potential for collisions.

What is the FHWA Goal for Work Zones?

As an agency dedicated to safe and efficient surface transportation, FHWA is dedicated to reducing congestion and crashes in work zones. Consequently, the safe and efficient flow of traffic through work zones is a major concern. As we address congestion in work zones, we can help improve safety as well. Smoother traffic flow through work zones can lead to fewer rear-end crashes, the most-common type of work zone crash, less frustrated drivers that drive more safely, and quicker project completion.

What is the FHWA Doing to Alleviate Work Zone Challenges?

FHWA develops and provides a broad array of guidelines and training, conducts research, implements regulatory changes, and works continuously to increase public awareness through partnering activities.

Education: FHWA is dedicated to improving public awareness and providing technical resources on topics related to work zone safety and mobility through web sites, training courses, workshops, CDs, guidebooks, brochures, bilingual safety public outreach materials, and events such as National Work Zone Awareness Week. FHWA provides work zone training courses for federal, state, local, and tribal highway engineers and other target audiences such as law enforcement, first responders, and front line workers. The FHWA work zone website can be accessed at www.fhwa.dot.gov/workzones and provides information on a range of work zone safety and mobility topics, including training.

The National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse (www.workzonesafety.org) is a comprehensive web site that provides tools and resources to work zone practitioners. The Clearinghouse contains a detailed summary of work zone training and guidance materials developed under FHWA's Work Zone Safety Grants Program. Since its inception in 2006, more than 56,000 individuals have received training under this program. In addition, 51 guideline publications and 41 training modules have been developed and more than 150,000 copies have been distributed electronically and in print. More information on this program and its products can be found at www.workzonesafety.org/fhwa_wz_grant.

FHWA has established a Work Zone Peer-to-Peer Program [1-866-P2P-FHWA or WorkZoneP2P@dot.gov] that serves as a resource to agencies looking for better methods, tools, and strategies to improve work zone safety and mobility. FHWA also publishes a *Best Practices Guidebook* (available at www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/practices/practices.htm), that highlights state transportation agency work zone practices throughout the United States.

Research: FHWA conducts a broad range of research to identify and develop improved work zone practices in areas such as traffic analysis and planning, transportation management plans, intelligent transportation systems (ITS), best practices, and the use of data to better understand work zone issues.

Regulation: FHWA has issued regulations to improve work zone planning, design, and implementation for safer and more efficient work zones for both workers and road users.

Partnerships: FHWA believes that partnerships create synergy and are very important to improving work zone safety and mobility. FHWA is one of the founding partners of the annual *National Work Zone Awareness Week* held every year in April. Through a large network of government and industry partners, including the other two founding partners AASHTO and ATSSA, this week of national, state and local public activities seeks to raise public consciousness about the need for driving safely in work zones.