15th Annual National Work Zone Awareness Week

April 7-11, 2014

Work Zone Speeding: A Costly Mistake

Work Zone Safety and Mobility Fact Sheet

What is National Work Zone Awareness Week?

The National Work Zone Awareness Week began in 1999 when the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) signed a Memorandum of Agreement pledging to increase public awareness of work zone safety issues through a national media campaign. Since then, awareness has continued to grow, with State agencies and other organizations sponsoring high-visibility education and outreach initiatives.

Local, state and federal transportation officials observe it in April, the start of highway construction season across most of the country. The 2014 National Work Zone Awareness Week will be held April 7-11, 2014, and the national "kick-off" event will take place on April 8th in Seattle, Washington. The 2014 theme is "Work Zone Speeding: A Costly Mistake".

Why is Work Zone Safety Important?

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 challenges for motorists as they travel through work zones. Careful attention should be paid to actions that have the potential to impact the safety of everyone involved, including drivers and their passengers, workers, and pedestrians. While safe and efficient work zones begin with proper planning, design, and implementation, drivers must be attentive to changing conditions and exercise caution when they approach and travel through a work zone.

Work zone statistics for 2012:

- **609 traffic-related fatalities (19 more compared to 590 in 2011)**
- **32,000 injuries (8,000 less compared to 40,000 in 2011)**
- **130 worker fatalities (8 more compared to 122 in 2011)**
- **132 fatal crashes involving large trucks and buses (18 less compared to 150 in 2011)**

Who is Responsible for Work Zone Safety and Mobility?

Everyone is responsible for making work zones work better and safer:

- **Project planners, designers, and construction/maintenance/utility workers** have the responsibility to integrate safety, mobility and constructability when planning, designing, and implementing work zones.
- **Drivers, bikers, motorcyclists and pedestrians** have the responsibility to always be alert, obey traffic laws and signs, and pay attention to their surroundings when approaching and traveling through a work zone. Properly securing pets in a vehicle prevents driver distraction and harm to the animal.
- **Passengers** should always buckle up, act responsibly, and avoid distracting the driver.
- **Public safety agencies** have the responsibility of responding to and securing crash locations and enforcing traffic laws.
- **Local communities, and state and local governments** need to allocate funding for safe roads and increase public awareness about work zone safety.
- **Police and courts** have the responsibility of enforcing traffic and work zone laws.

How Does Driver Behavior Impact Work Zone Safety?

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.

As highlighted by this year's theme, speeding in work zones can be a costly mistake to everyone. Speeding is a major contributing factor of work zone crashes. In addition, speeding was involved in more than one-third (36%) of the fatal crashes that occurred in construction/maintenance zones in 2011.

When motorists are alert, obey traffic control devices (e.g. 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**. Obey the posted speed limit at all times, even when workers are not present.
- **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, Moms, Sons, Daughters, Brothers, and Sisters Work HERE!

Exposure in 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.

In addition to the work zone related fatalities and injuries experienced on our highways, work zones on our freeways also 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 FHWA's Goal for Safer and More Mobile 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. While 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, less frustrated drivers that drive more safely, and quicker project completion.

What is FHWA Doing to Alleviate Work Zone Challenges?

FHWA is actively pursuing improved work zone safety and mobility through a multi-faceted approach of better engineering, education, enforcement, increased coordination with public safety agencies (police, fire and EMS), and regulation. FHWA also partners with a variety of organizations that are interested in improving work zone safety and mobility.

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's work zone website can be accessed at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/workzones and information on training is available at http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/outreach/outreach.htm.

The National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse (http://www.workzonesafety.org) is a comprehensive work zone information resource that reaches the public and the highway community and provides tools and resources to work zone practitioners. Also, the Work Zone Safety Grants Program is another resource for development of work zone related guidance and training. Since its inception in 2006, more than 65,000 individuals have received training under this program. In addition, more than 55 guideline publications and 45 training modules have been developed and more than 180,000 copies have been distributed electronically and in print. More information on this program and its products can be found at http://www.workzonesafety.org/fhwa_wz_grant.

FHWA has established a Work Zone Peer-to-Peer Program [1-866-P2P-FHWA (1-866-727-3492) 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.

Engineering: FHWA supports research into a variety of design features that create better work zones. Two areas that FHWA focuses on are standardization and evaluation. Standardization of work zone areas is set by FHWA in both traffic control and in work zone safety devices. National standards for controlling traffic through work zones are contained in the Manual on Uniform Traffic control Devices (MUTCD) (the most current edition of the official FHWA publication is available at http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/). The latest information regarding approved work zone safety devices can be found at http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/roadway_dept/policy_guide/road_hardware/.

FHWA has developed resources to help practitioners incorporate work zone safety and mobility in design-build projects (available at http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/resources/designbuild.htm).

For the technical highway community, FHWA published a Best Practices Guidebook (available at http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/practices/practices.htm), that highlights state transportation agency work zone practices throughout the United States.

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. These regulations can be found at http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/resources/policy.htm.

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. A number of resources for implementing various types of ITS in work zones are available at http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/its/index.htm.

Enforcement: As part of our comprehensive safety program, FHWA engineers work closely with State highway engineers and law enforcement officials to identify appropriate engineering countermeasures for high risk locations and for new roads. In addition to issuing regulations that emphasize routine consideration of key safety countermeasures that would improve work zone safety, FHWA has also funded research on the use of variable speed limits in work zones and studied automated enforcement for driver compliance with posted speeds.

Partnership Activities: 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.