



Roadway Work Zone Safety

In 2007 there were 835 people killed and 41,475 people injured in work zone crashes. Compared to 2006, work zone fatalities decreased 17% and injuries increased 10%. Of the 835 people killed in work zones, 644 were in construction zones, 88 were in maintenance zones, 11 were in utility zones, and 92 were in an unknown type of work zone.

Based on a National Safety Council survey in August 2008, 35 states reported having work zone speed laws and 49 states had special penalties for traffic violations in work zones, such as increased or doubled fines. Hawaii and the District of Columbia were the only jurisdictions with neither.

We all are responsible for driving, walking, and biking, safely through work zones. The engineers and planners have the responsibility to make sure the work zone is designed and operating properly -- with safety in mind. Drivers and pedestrians have the responsibility to always be alert and obey the traffic laws. The police and the courts have the responsibility to make sure that the traffic and work zone laws are enforced. 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. Everyone should take responsibility for work zone safety.

Tips for driving safely in work zones

- Expect the unexpected -- Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be changed, and people may be working on or near the road.
- Slow down -- Speeding is one of the major causes of work zone crashes.
- Don't tailgate -- Keep a safe distance between you and the car ahead of you. The most common crash in a highway work zone is the rear end collision.
- Keep your distance -- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and the construction workers and their equipment.
- Pay attention to the signs -- The warning signs are there to help you and other drivers move safely through the work zone. Observe the posted signs until you see the one that says you've left the work zone.
- Obey road crew flaggers -- The flagger knows what is best for moving traffic safely in the work zone. A flagger has the same authority as a regulatory sign, so you can be cited for disobeying his or her directions.
- Stay alert and minimize distractions -- Dedicate your full attention to the roadway and avoid changing radio stations or using cell phones while driving.

- Keep up with the traffic flow -- Motorists can help maintain traffic flow and posted speeds by merging as soon as possible. Don't drive right up to the lane closure and then try to barge in.
- Expect delays -- Schedule enough time to drive safely and check radio, tv and web sites for traffic information.
- Be patient and stay calm -- The work zone crew members are working to improve the road and make your future drive better.

This information is in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, and American Road & Transportation Builders Association.