

## 2018 National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 9-13 – Work Zone Safety: Everybody's Responsibility

As our highway infrastructure ages, many highway agencies are focusing on rebuilding existing roadways instead of building new ones. Highway improvement projects being performed on roadways that are open to traffic are increasing. At the same time, traffic continues to grow and creates more congestion. This combination of more work zones and heavier traffic results in increased risk for highway workers. With this in mind, drivers must pay extra attention in highway work zones and take every precaution to keep themselves, other travelers and highway workers safe so that everyone can go home at the end of the day.

Many factors contribute to work zone accidents, including speeding, cell phone use and inattentive, distracted or aggressive driving. All of these behaviors are discouraged when driving on any road, but they can be especially dangerous in work zones. The most common type of accidents in work zones are rear-end collisions, so it is important that drivers maintain adequate following distances.

NYSDOT reported 662 crashes in capital construction work zones on state roads and bridges in 2016, resulting in 6 motorist fatalities and 187 injuries to motorists, contractor employees and NYSDOT staff. There were 10 injuries and one fatality in maintenance work zones last year. In addition, drivers last year intruded into closed portions of highway construction work zones 92 times and maintenance work zones 84 times, endangering themselves, their passengers, highway workers and other travelers.

Nationally there were 658 work zone fatal crashes, resulting in 765 fatalities. 143 of those fatalities were worker fatalities.

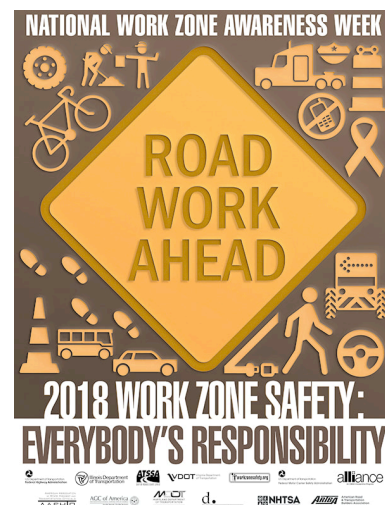
With the construction season about to begin, The National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week serves as an opportune time to remind motorists to be extra vigilant when driving through a work

zone. National Work Zone Awareness Week is designated by the Federal Highway Administration to raise driver awareness and reduce the number of vehicle intrusions into work zones, incidents that can cause injuries and fatalities.

This year's safety campaign theme, Work Zone Safety: Everybody's Responsibility, highlights motorists' responsibility to be alert and act safely while in and around work zones, where driving conditions can vary. Highway work zones often have reduced speed limits, closed or shifted traffic lanes and people working on or near the road, making it that much more important for motorists to be aware of their surroundings.

In addition, on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, all roadway safety professionals across the country are encouraged to wear orange to proudly show their support of work zone safety. Go Orange Day and NWZAW is an important time to show your support of the roadway safety industry, especially to the families of victims who have lost their lives in work zones.

For more information of Nation Work Zone Awareness week, visit [https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/outreach/wz\\_awareness.htm](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/outreach/wz_awareness.htm)



# Monthly Toolbox Talk

## Creating Safer Work Zones: Improving Operations on Both Sides of the Barrel

The following methods can be used to minimize and control risks for workers:

- High-visibility Apparel
- Worker Training
- Activity Area Planning
- Speed Control
- Positive Separation
- Lighting
- Worker Safety Planning
- Special Devices

### High-Visibility Apparel:

- All workers should wear high visibility apparel.
- Worker visibility during dawn or dusk conditions may be enhanced by the use of fluorescent colored high-visibility apparel.
- The use of colors such as yellow-green for the worker apparel may help to differentiate the worker from the orange colored work vehicles, signs, drums, etc.

### Worker Training:

- Workers should be trained in how to work near traffic.
- Workers responsible for temporary traffic control should be adequately trained.
- Work rules should be established and enforced to minimize worker risks from traffic.

### Activity Area Planning:

- Routes should be identified and marked to allow workers and work vehicles to safely enter and exit the workspace.
- Backing should be controlled by spotters or other positive means, wherever workers or pedestrians may be present.
- Overhead and underground utilities should be located and marked to prevent contact by equipment and workers.

### Speed Control:

Compliance with posted speed limits is important to protect workers and the traveling public. The following strategies can be used to control traffic speeds through work zones, whether or not the speed limit is reduced:

- Establish appropriate speed limits for work zone
- Properly posted regulatory speed limits
- Law enforcement
- Radar activated changeable message signs
- Flaggers (under some conditions)



### **Positive Separation of Traffic and Work Activities:**

Separating traffic from work activities by the use of temporary traffic barriers, shadow vehicles with truck-mounted attenuators, or similar devices minimizes risk for both workers and travelers. The need for positive separation should be based on work zone factors including:

- Traffic speed and volume
- Distance between workers and traffic
- Duration and type of work operations
- Physical hazards present in the work zone
- Alignment of traffic lanes through the work zone

### **Lighting:**

Temporary lighting should be used in night work zones to accomplish the following:

- The work area and its approaches should be lighted to provide better visibility for drivers to safely travel through the work zone.
- Illumination should be provided wherever workers are present to make them visible.
- Glare must be controlled, so as not to interfere with the visibility of the work zone by drivers and workers.

### **Worker Safety Planning:**

Planning, implementation, and oversight of worker safety should be the responsibility of a competent safety specialist, and should adequately address the requirements of OSHA and MUTCD. In particular:

- A hazard assessment of the work site should be conducted to identify worker risks.
- Engineering and administrative controls and personal protective measures should be implemented to protect workers from the identified risk.

### **Special Devices:**

Judicious use of special traffic control devices may be helpful in reducing worker risks in certain work zone situations. These include:

- Rumble strips
- Changeable message signs
- Intrusion alarms
- Spotters

