

2011 Work Zone Safety Fact Sheet & Safety Tips

Background

- Vehicle volumes on the state highway system have doubled in the past 20 years, increasing the risks for roadway workers.
- Projects funded through Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA), American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and Oregon Jobs and Transportation Act (HB2001) along with the annual state Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and other city, county, and utility work means work zones can be found in every area of the state.

Nature of the problem

- National studies indicate that **driver inattention** is the single biggest factor in work zone crashes.
- Excessive vehicle speed is also a serious problem.
- Some 42 percent of work zone crashes occur in the transition zone *prior* to the work area.

Magnitude of problem

- In Oregon during the last 10 years, there's been an average of 475 work zone related crashes each year; an average of 18 work zone related serious injury crashes each year; and an average of 8 work zone fatal crashes each year.
- For 2010, preliminary estimates confirm nine work zone fatalities in Oregon. In 2009, the number of fatalities was eighteen, while in 2008, there were five.
- Nationally, in 2009 there were 667 fatalities in work zones. In 2008, there were 720 fatalities in work zones and, in 2007, there were 835 work zone fatalities.
- Work zone safety is a growing roadway safety concern. In 2008, there were 720 work zone fatalities; this figure represents 2% of all roadway fatalities for the year. Over four out of every five work zone fatalities were motorists. In addition, there are over 40,000 injuries in work zones.
- The situation is serious for both drivers and workers, but there are actually ***far more drivers and their passengers killed and injured in roadway work zones in comparison to workers.***
- Roadway construction is one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States: *the risk of death is seven times higher for roadway workers than for an average worker.*

- Work zone crashes tend to be more severe than other types of crashes.

What ODOT is doing...

- Administering about \$3.8 million in federal funds for special work zone traffic patrols from July 2011 – June 2013 on state highways. Some funds are used for public information, education and police enforcement related equipment.
- Continually reviewing projects, policies, procedures, training, contract specifications and work zone evaluations, as well as legislative and educational efforts, to improve upon the safety and quality of their work zones.
- Participating in extensive training, both internally and externally, on work zone and flagging safety, temporary traffic control plan design, enhanced traffic control supervision and inspection, work zone traffic analysis and traffic control planning for police officers.
- Using rigid barrier systems in work zones, when practical, to separate work areas from traffic.
- Closing roadway segments to traffic to reduce exposure to workers and drivers, and expedite project schedules.
- Performing work at night, when possible, to avoid peak traffic congestion.
- Providing enhanced traffic control planning, including dedicated traffic control supervisors during construction.
- Communicating with motorists using, “**Give ‘Em A Brake**” and, “**Respect the Cone Zone, Better Roads Ahead**” campaigns that include print, radio and television media. Oregon’s use of the, “**Give ‘Em A Brake**” campaign celebrated its 20th year of use in May, 2009.

What's coming up during the 2011 construction season?

- Expanded training for ODOT and its contractors in work zone set-up and inspection through Inspector Certification and Traffic Control Supervisor (TCS) Certification.
- Performance-based contracts that improve safety through plans, policies and practices.

- Continued use of temporary speed zone reductions requiring drivers to obey lower regulatory speeds in qualifying work zones.
- Increased number of Traffic Control Supervisors (TCS) on projects to ensure the safe placement and condition of traffic control devices.
- Promoting the use of TripCheck, TripCheck Mobile, and 5-1-1 telephone travel information system through the work zone enforcement, public information and education campaign.
- Additional police agencies participating in special enforcement patrols.
- Continued enforcement of the “Fines Double” law for traffic violations in work zones.
- Increased use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to utilize real-time traffic data to actively manage traffic through the work zone.
- Active efforts by public works and contractor crews to ensure work zone signing accurately reflects current activities.
- Continued partnering with the Oregon Trucking Associations and Association of General Contractors to improve safety in work zones.

Safety Tips

For Drivers

- The **number one, most important action** drivers can take is to pay complete attention to the driving task, especially in the transition zone before the work area. An inattentive driver is the most common cause for work zone crashes.
- Orange is Your Clue! Pay attention when you see orange signs, barrels, cones, and barricades. Obey all speed signs, because some may be reduced for your safety to avoid a serious crash.
- Double your following distance. Don't tailgate.
- Get in the correct lane *well in advance*.
- Remember, work zone traffic lanes often are narrow, without shoulders or emergency lanes.
- Be aware of temporary construction accesses on either side of the roadway.
- Be aware and don't follow construction vehicles as they travel into and out of the work areas.
- Expect delays — Plan for them and leave early so you can drive safely through the work zone.
- Patience is vital! Be as courteous to other drivers as you'd like them to be to you.
- Avoid work zones when you can by using an alternate route.
- Call 5-1-1 for the latest traffic, weather and highway conditions by route or mountain pass.
- Visit www.TripCheck.com or use TripCheck Mobile www.TripCheck.com/mobile to check routes, work zones and road and weather conditions before you head out.

For Workers

- **Expect the unexpected and don't assume drivers see you.**
- Understand the difficulty drivers have in negotiating work zones. Avoid requiring drivers to make sudden lane changes or encounter unexpected conditions.
- Pay attention to the traffic. Beware of complacency.
- Don't have your back to traffic. If you must have your back to traffic, use a spotter. Have a communication plan between the spotter and the workers.
- Flaggers need to stand on the shoulder and focus on approaching vehicles. Avoid standing in the lane unless visibility is an issue. Once traffic is stopped, flaggers should move back to the shoulder.
- Bring more attention to yourself by wearing ANSI Class 3 high visibility safety garments - recommended at night or during low-light conditions for added reflectivity.
- All workers, including emergency vehicle responders, within the right of way shall wear high visibility safety garments that meet ANSI Performance Class 2 or 3.