

2009 Work Zone Safety Facts and Tips

Background

- State highway vehicle volumes have doubled in the past 20 years, increasing the risks for highway construction workers.
- In addition, the Oregon Transportation Investment Act III continues to roughly double the number of work zones on state highways and bridges this construction season.
- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will increase the number of work zones on Oregon's highways.
- The Governor's proposed Jobs and Transportation Bill, HB 2120, will also increase work zone construction if passed.



Nature of the problem

- According to national studies, inattentive drivers are the single biggest factor in work zone crashes.
- Excessive speed is the second biggest factor in work zone crashes.
- 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 465 work zone related crashes each year, including an average of 16 serious injury crashes and an average of eight fatal crashes.
- For 2008, preliminary estimates confirm six work zone fatalities in Oregon. In 2007, the number of fatalities was 11, while in 2006, there were five.
- In work zones nationwide:
 - In 2007, there were 835 work zone fatalities.
 - In 2006, there were 1,010.
 - In 2005, there were 1,074.
- Nationally, on average, three work zone fatalities occur every day or about one every eight hours. In addition, an average of 160 work zone injuries occur every day or about one every nine minutes.
- The situation is serious for both drivers and workers. In Oregon, there are actually ***far more drivers and passengers killed and injured in work zones in comparison to workers.***
- Highway construction is one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States. *The risk of death is seven times higher for highway 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 2009 – June 2011 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 understanding traffic control design 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 risks to workers and drivers, and expedite construction schedules.
- Performing work at night, when possible, to mitigate exposure.
- Providing enhanced traffic control planning, including dedicated traffic control supervisors during construction.
- Communicating with motorists using, “**Give ‘Em A Brake**” and, “**Slow Down, Better Roads Ahead**” campaigns that include print, radio and television media. Oregon’s use of the, “**Give ‘Em A Brake**” campaign will celebrate its 20th year of use in May, 2009.



What’s coming up during the 2009 construction season?

- Expanded training for ODOT and its contractors in work zone set-up and inspection through inspector certification and traffic control supervisor 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 on projects to ensure the safe placement and condition of traffic control devices.
- Promoting the use of TripCheck and 5-1-1 travel information system through the work zone enforcement, public information and education campaign.
- Additional police agencies participating in special enforcement patrols.
- Continued notification of the “Double Fines” law for traffic violations in work zones.
- Active efforts by public works and contractor crews to ensure work zone signing accurately reflects current activities.
- Continued partnering with the Oregon Trucking Association and Association of General Contractors to improve safety in work zones.
- Further progress on the photo radar in work zone demonstration project - authorized by the 2007 Legislature. The law allows ODOT to request law enforcement agencies

already authorized to use photo radar or the Oregon State Police to do so within a work zone as long as at least one highway worker is present and the work zone is not on an interstate.

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! Slow down when you see orange signs, barrels and barricades. Speeding is the second most common cause in a work zone 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.
- 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 or visit www.TripCheck.com to check routes, work zones and road and weather conditions before you head out.

