



# BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

## 2023 National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 17-21 – You Play a Role in Work Zone Safety. Work with Us.

With an aging highway infrastructure, the federal government and many state highway agencies are focusing on rebuilding existing roadways, bridges, and tunnels. Highway improvement projects being performed on roadways that are open to traffic will be 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 the motorist and Work Zone workers. Drivers must pay extra attention in Work Zones and take every precaution to keep themselves, other travelers, and Work Zone workers safe so that everyone can arrive home safely 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 these behaviors are discouraged when driving on any road, but they can be especially dangerous in Work Zones. Many of the fatal crashes in Work Zones involve rear-end collisions. Rear-end collision involvement in fatal work zone crashes is consistently higher on rural roadways than urban roadways. In fact, nearly 40 percent of fatal Work Zone crashes on rural interstates involve a rear-end collision, compared to only about 18 percent of non-work zone fatal crashes on those roadways.

In 2020, nationally there were approximately 102,000 total Work Zone crashes, resulting in approximately 44,000 injuries. Of that total, there were 774 fatal Work Zone crashes, resulting in 857 fatalities. 117 of those fatalities were workers.

For the latest three years of available data (2017-2019), over 74 percent of the highway worker fatalities at a road construction site involved a worker on foot being struck by a vehicle (45%) or being a driver or occupant of a vehicle involved in the incident (29%). In 2020, 53 percent of worker fatalities involved a worker on foot being struck by a vehicle.

With the construction season about to begin, National Work Zone 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 serious injuries and fatalities.

This year's safety campaign theme is, **You Play a Role in Work Zone Safety. Work with Us.**

What many fail to recognize is the vast majority of people killed in work zone crashes are motorists and their passengers. It is of utmost importance for drivers to slow down and stay focused while approaching and passing through a roadway Work Zone, for their own safety and the safety of those workers engaged in Work Zone activities.

While it is important to modify the driving behaviors of the motorist, it is critical that all roadway construction contractors plan and establish their work zones in adherence with those standards set forth in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). A well planned and properly executed Construction Work Zone is essential for providing safe passage for pedestrians and the motoring public during maintenance and construction activities on all roadways.

**NWZAW** will begin on **Monday, April 17** with Work Zone Safety Training Day, which emphasizes the importance of laying the groundwork for safety through training of personnel. Companies are encouraged to pause during the workday for safety demonstrations, discussions about safety policies and other prevention steps.

On **Wednesday, April 19** all roadway safety professionals across the country are encouraged to wear orange to proudly show their support of work zone safety. National Work Zone Awareness Week and "Go Orange Day" are especially important to the families of victims who have lost their lives in work zones.

For more information of National Work Zone Awareness week, visit <https://www.nwzaw.org>



# Monthly Toolbox Talk

## Traffic Control - Flagging

All flaggers must be trained and certified before flagging traffic on job sites. Flaggers play a critical role in maintaining public safety and crew safety. Flaggers must be prepared for work with appropriate personal protective equipment, including hardhat, Class II or III retroreflective clothing, safety glasses and appropriate weather protection.

### Flaggers must also be able to:

- Receive and communicate specific instructions clearly, firmly and courteously.
- Move and maneuver quickly, to avoid danger from errant vehicles. This means a flagger shall not be in a sitting position and no vehicles, that may obscure the flagger shall be parked near the flagging station.
- Control signaling devices (such as stop/slow paddles and flags), to provide clear and positive guidance to drivers approaching a temporary traffic control zone.
- Maintain situational awareness, protect the work crew, and provide guidance and direction to the traveling public.

### Foreman and flaggers:

- Review traffic control drawings together to ensure there is proper distance between the flaggers and the work area according to speed of traffic and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) guidelines.
- Plan work coverage to allow for break time.

### Foreman and crew:

- Be on notice that the flagger is there to communicate with the motoring public and YOU.
- Follow directions to stop work, look up or clear the road when directed by the flagger.
- Do not solely rely on the flagger to warn you of oncoming traffic – maintain situational awareness and be alert to traffic.

### Flagger:

- Inspect all equipment before use. Illumination devices must be functioning and at full power when in use and radio batteries must be charged.
- Ensure all flaggers are operating on the same radio channel and plan for an escape area.
- Maintain visual contact with oncoming motorist, and never turn your back on traffic.

All employees have “**STOP WORK AUTHORITY**” and the ability to stop their work when they have a reasonable safety concern.

