



BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

2025 National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 21-25 – Respect the Zone, So We All Get Home

As our highway infrastructure ages, the federal government and many 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. With this in mind, 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 of 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. Properly planned and executed work zones are critical to provide sufficient warnings to drivers on these limited sightline roadways.

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, "**Respect the Zone, So We All Get Home.**" The key message is for motorists to use extra caution in work zones. 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.

During 2024, there were 322 "Work Zone Intrusions" on New York state roads maintained by the State Department of Transportation and Thruway Authority. A "Work Zone Intrusion" is defined as an incident where a motor vehicle has entered a portion of the roadway that is closed due to construction or maintenance activity. Those crashes resulted in two fatalities and 138 injuries to highway workers and vehicle occupants.

To ensure the safety of both motorists and highway construction and maintenance workers, drivers must pay extra attention, adjust speeds accordingly and take every precaution in highway work zones to keep themselves and highway construction and maintenance workers safe so that everyone can go home safely at the end of the day.

Motorists are required to slow down, be alert and drive carefully in all work zones. In addition, motorists are required to move over a lane if safely possible for **all vehicles stopped along the road**. This includes vehicles displaying red, white, blue, amber or green lights that indicate emergency response vehicles, tow trucks and highway construction and maintenance vehicles. Failure to comply will result in significant civil and possible criminal penalties.

While this effort may modify the driving behaviors of the motorist, it is critical that all roadway construction contractors plan and establish their work zones in adherence to 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.

On **Wednesday, April 23, 2025**, 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 Nation 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 hard hat, 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, in order 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), in order 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 motorists 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.

