



IDOT, Tollway, ISP team up to encourage 'Safe Work Zones for All'

April 20 2020 1:32 PM



SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Tollway, Illinois State Police, industry partners and frontline construction workers are joining forces once again for National Work Zone Awareness Week to ensure “Safe Work Zones for All.” Throughout Illinois, improving and maintaining infrastructure continues as an essential public service, with special care being taken to protect workers during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“At IDOT, we are committed to keeping this construction season on schedule, but urge the public to keep following stay-at-home orders and traveling only if you must,” said Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. “If you are driving at any time this year, you will drive through a work zone. Put down the phone. Pay attention to the signs. Don’t speed. At the end of the day, everyone wants to get home safely. Always remember: See Orange. Slow Down. Save Lives.”

The theme for this year’s National Work Zone Awareness Week is “Safe Work Zones for All: Protect workers. Protect road users,” reinforcing the message that work zones present special safety considerations for workers and anyone traveling through them, including drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users.

To further protect workers this year and help stop the spread of the coronavirus, extra safety plans are in place for projects throughout the state. Safety measures include limiting the number of people on a job site, keeping a 6-foot distance between workers, avoiding sharing tools and performing meetings online or via conference call.

Because of decreased traffic volumes and improving weather, increased speeding and severe crashes are becoming growing concerns.

“This is an unusual time for all of us. We have far less traffic in our work zones, which makes work zone safety awareness more critical than ever,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director José Alvarez. “Construction is still occurring all along our system. Drivers need to slow down, be alert for new traffic patterns and always follow posted speed limits for the safety of workers, first responders and other drivers.”

Each year, more than 5,100 crashes on average occur in Illinois work zones, resulting in almost 1,400 injuries. In 2019, 30 people died in work zones in Illinois, including one worker.

Last year, Gov. JB Pritzker signed legislation that sets a penalty of between \$100 and \$1,000 for drivers who disobey traffic-control devices within work zones. The penalty cap for violations while workers are present increased from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

“One of the primary goals of the Illinois State Police is to safeguard the people of Illinois, which is why we will continue to bring awareness to the public regarding issues that affect the lives and safety of Illinois workers,” said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. “During work zone safety week, the ISP strongly urges all drivers during this pandemic to help us protect workers who continue to put their lives at risk. When traveling through work zones, keep your eyes on the road, SLOW DOWN and help us save lives.”

Guidelines for traveling through work zones:

- Drop it and drive. Phones and electronic devices down at all times – it's the law.
- Obey the signs. They will help you safely navigate work zones – and sometimes avoid delays.
- Give it a brake. The posted speed limits are there for the safety of workers and you.
- Consider the limitations of heavy equipment, trucks and commercial vehicles. Provide them extra distance to come to a complete stop if they are behind you.
- Expect the unexpected. Lane shifts and closures, slowed and stopped traffic are common.
- Look for the dynamic or “zipper” merge at select projects. To improve traffic flow, digital message signs will advise motorists when and when not to merge and enter the work zone.

To promote safety in the field this week, IDOT is once again promoting “tailgate talks” with its industry partners to give workers refreshers on work zone protocol.

For additional facts, printable materials and information on highway projects this year in Illinois, click [here](#) or visit idot.illinois.gov. Tollway projects are at www.illinoistollway.com/projects.

Work zone safety is yet another element of IDOT's comprehensive multimedia campaign, Life or Death Illinois, highlighting the incredible responsibility of each driver to make good decisions and decrease the number of lives lost each year. Visit lifeordeathillinois.com for more information.