



Work Zone Safety Awareness Week Kicks Off in Illinois

by Illinois Department of Transportation
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ILLINOIS - With another historic construction season underway in Illinois, the Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois State Police, Illinois Tollway, industry partners and frontline construction workers today teamed up for National Work Zone Awareness Week to remind the public that “Work zones are temporary. Actions behind the wheel can last forever.”

“Thanks to Gov. JB Pritzker’s Rebuild Illinois capital program, IDOT is enjoying some of its busiest and most productive construction seasons ever, resulting in hundreds of work zones across the state,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. “If you’re traveling anywhere in Illinois, you will be traveling through a work zone at some point. Remember the people behind the cones and barricades. Reduce your speed, obey the signs and give them room to work. Having to spend a couple of extra minutes

slowing down and driving cautiously through a work zone is a small price to make sure everyone gets home safely at the end of the day.”

The theme for this year’s National Work Zone Awareness Week is “Work zones are temporary. Actions behind the wheel can last forever,” reinforcing the message that while construction might be a temporary inconvenience, one mistake driving through it can result in the loss of life, yours included. When you approach a work zone, eliminate distractions, decrease your speed and proceed with caution.

To call attention to the heightened risks of work zones, Gov. Pritzker has proclaimed April 15-19 as “Work Zone Safety Awareness Week” in Illinois.

At all times, the public should be ready for lane closures, changes in traffic patterns, reduced speed limits and the presence of workers and equipment. To promote safety in the field this week, IDOT is once again holding “tailgate talks” among its staff to give workers refreshers on work zone protocol.

“Imagine going to work every day where you're just feet from cars speeding past at 75 or 85 miles an hour,” said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. “That's what highway maintainers, first responders and tow truck drivers face every day. Already in 2024, 12 ISP squad cars have been hit in ‘move over’ crashes. Pay attention in work zones so a temporary slowdown doesn't turn into a long-term loss.”

Each year, more than 6,000 motor vehicle crashes on average occur in Illinois work zones, resulting in more than 1,600 injuries. Preliminary statistics for 2023 show that 24 people died in work zones in Illinois, including one worker, a reminder that crashes in work zones generally have a much greater impact on drivers and their passengers.

“We’re committed to operating safe work zones and continually looking for ways to better protect everyone who uses our roads, but we can’t do it alone,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Cassaundra Rouse. “We’re urging our customers to help us by taking extra precautions in work zones, including slowing down and staying alert for workers and emergency responders. It takes all of us working together to keep our roads safe.”

The following guidelines for traveling through work zones should be followed at all times:

- 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.
- Slow down. The posted speed limits are there for the safety of workers and you.

- Be on the lookout for slowed or stopped traffic.
- 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.

A work zone can take many forms: A maintenance crew patching potholes or collecting litter, a major interstate reconstruction, a minor repair on a neighborhood street or a utility company out in the field. If you see orange, slow down and save lives.

For additional facts, printable materials and information on projects this year in Illinois, click [here](#) or visit idot.click/work-zones.

Once again, IDOT is partnering with communities and businesses across the state to light buildings and bridges orange to commemorate the week. They include: Peoria's Murray Baker Bridge, the Interstate 74 bridge in the Quad Cities, Rockford's Morgan Street Bridge and City Hall as well as the building owners association in downtown Chicago.

On Friday, IDOT also is collaborating with the Laborers' International Union of North America to distribute informational material at many of the state's rest areas on how to keep you and your family safe traveling through work zones.

Work zone safety is another element of IDOT's comprehensive multimedia campaign, "It's Not a Game," highlighting the fact that there are no extra lives, no respawns and no second chances to get it right with safety on the roads. Visit itsnotagameillinois.com for more information.

"The men and women fixing our streets, highways and bridges are among the most vulnerable road users because their jobs require them to be on foot near oncoming traffic," said **Federal Highway Administrator Shailen Bhatt**. "We hope drivers stay alert so these mothers, fathers, sons and daughters who are America's transportation heroes can do their jobs without incident and arrive home safely when their shift is over."