

Dept. of Transportation: Drive to protect workers this construction season

Posted on Wednesday, Mar 2, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Construction season in Wisconsin is just around the corner and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is urging everyone to be prepared to keep crews safe.

The Wisconsin State Patrol's March Law of the Month highlights the rules and guidelines for work zones that aim to protect workers as they repair the roads.

"It's never too early to look for orange barrels," WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson said. "From big projects to pothole repairs, you can expect to see construction and maintenance workers out in traffic all season. Drive to protect them. Buckle up, phone down."

There have been more than 12,000 crashes in work zones in the past five years. Those incidents led to about 61 deaths and more than 4,700 injuries. Most work zone crashes are caused by speeding, tailgating, and distracted driving.

Cell phone use is one of the most common factors in distracted driving incidents. Wisconsin law forbids texting while driving on any road. It is also illegal to use a [hand-held mobile device in work zones](#). A [new state law](#) took effect in December 2021 that expands this ban to areas surrounding emergency response vehicles with flashing lights.

"Work zones require a driver's full and complete attention. Barrels, lane shifts, and traffic backups can appear suddenly. Keep your eyes on the road and move over or slow down to protect construction crews and emergency responders," Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent Anthony Burrell said.

The state's [Move Over law](#) requires drivers to move out of the lane of traffic next to first responders and maintenance workers. If you can't move over, you must slow down.

Fines for traffic violations double in work zones and the consequences for injuring or killing someone in a work zone are even more costly and tragic.

Wisconsin State Patrol asks drivers to be cautious in work zones:

- Slow down when approaching construction work. Move over to avoid hitting a worker or equipment.
- Buckle up, phone down. Every trip. Every time.
- Be courteous with other drivers. Follow the [zipper merge method](#) to reduce backups, taking turns at the merge point.
- Download the [511 app](#) to know before you go. You can monitor construction projects and incidents on your route. The upgraded 511 conditions map now includes 14,000 miles of roads.