

Dept. of Transportation: Annual Work Zone Awareness Week highlights importance of highway safety

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Gov. Tony Evers has proclaimed next week (April 17-21) as National Work Zone Awareness Week in Wisconsin. For more than 20 years, National Work Zone Awareness Week has marked the start of construction season across our country, promoting road worker safety and cautious driving in work zones.

“Transportation investments are reaching all corners of the state and crews are rolling out the barrels to establish work zones for this year’s construction season,” Gov. Evers said. “Work Zone Awareness Week reminds us of our call to action, but these messages do not apply to just one week. Work zone safety must be top of mind for every driver when getting in the vehicle. Safe driving is always in season.”

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) reminds motorists of the importance of safe, responsible driving – especially in work zones as the 2023 construction season gets underway. In Wisconsin, work zones include highway construction and rolling maintenance operations as well as emergency response, municipal projects and utility work along local roads. Every year there are typically more than 300 state highway and bridge improvement projects in Wisconsin.

“Work zones are temporary, but our decisions behind the wheel can make an impact forever,” WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson said. “The people working behind the barrels rely on us to drive safely. Glancing at a text or social media alert while driving is not worth it. Let’s work together to avoid distractions and stay focused on the road ahead. Safe drivers create safe work zones.”

Preliminary data shows more than 2,000 crashes were recorded in Wisconsin work zones in 2022, resulting in eight deaths and more than 650 injuries.

- From 2018 to 2022, Wisconsin work zones saw more than 11,500 crashes causing 63 deaths and more than 4,300 injuries.
- Speeding, tailgating and distracted driving are listed as common factors in a majority of crashes.
- [Download the 2023 Wisconsin work zone safety fact sheet.](#)

Cell phone use is one of the most common factors in distracted driving crashes. Wisconsin law prohibits texting while driving on any road. It is also illegal to use a hand-held mobile device in work zones and in areas surrounding emergency response vehicles with flashing lights.

Drivers and passengers make up the vast majority of those injured or killed in a work zone crash, but workers remain at risk as well. Last year, a 25-year-old utility worker was struck and killed while unloading equipment on the side of a road in Sauk County. In 2021, a 57-year-old Clark County highway worker was killed and another worker was injured after being struck by a vehicle while removing a fallen tree during a storm.

“It only takes a momentary distraction to create a deadly situation on the road,” Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. “Through enforcement and public safety efforts, our goal is to motivate drivers to behave responsibly. Everyone must do their part behind the wheel to stay safe; remember: buckle up, phone down.”

We want everyone to get home safely each day. A moment of being distracted while driving can result in lives being changed forever.

How can people help?

- Drive safely. Be courteous, avoid distractions and obey posted speed limits.
- Leave the phone alone. Texting while driving is illegal statewide and talking on a hand-held mobile device is illegal in work zones.
- Move over, or slow down, when you see workers and vehicles with flashing lights along the highway. Wisconsin’s Move Over Law applies to maintenance operations as well as emergency response units.
- Buckle Up, Phone Down. Take the pledge at wisconsin.gov/BUPD and share

your commitment with others. Participants are encouraged to share a thumbs up/thumbs down photo on social media using the hashtag #BuckleUpPhoneDown then challenge friends, family and coworkers to do the same.

- Show support for work zone safety with the social media hashtags #WorkWithUs, #NWZAW, #WorkZoneSafety, or #Orange4Safety (but please never text and drive).
- Participate in “Go Orange Day” on Wednesday, April 19 by wearing orange in support of highway safety. (Tag it on social media with #Orange4Safety and #GoOrangeDay)
- A nationwide moment of silence is planned for Friday, April 21 for people who lost their lives in a work zone incident.
- Visit wisconsindot.gov and search “work zone” for more tips and information.