

Work zone hazards

Everyone knows that highway work zones can be a dangerous place to work, but not everyone knows they can be an even more dangerous place to drive. In fact, 85 percent of people killed in work zone crashes are motorists. Each year in the United States approximately 1,000 people die and thousands are injured in work zone crashes. Approximately 150 fatalities occur annually in Texas – more than any other state.

Hazardous work zone driving conditions are created by uneven pavement, narrow lanes, concrete barriers, slow-moving heavy equipment, vehicles making sudden stops, and loose gravel. In spite of these conditions, studies have found that the two most common reasons for work zone crashes are speeding and inattention to driving. These findings are supported by the fact that one in three crashes in work zones are rear-end collisions.

There can be over 1,000 highway work zones at any one time on Texas highways. This is especially true during peak highway construction and maintenance periods in late spring and summer.

Making work zones safer

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) funds work zone research projects, such as advance warning system studies, to find ways to improve driving conditions and reduce injuries and fatalities in highway work zones. Work zones have been greatly improved over the years through the use of crashworthy construction drums, signs and barricades designed to reduce vehicle damage and potential driver injury when hit by a vehicle. However, the most important factor in making work zones safer is alert, skilled and knowledgeable drivers.

TxDOT urges motorists to remember the following driving tips to ensure that the minor inconvenience of highway maintenance and construction doesn't turn into a tragedy.

Drive with caution

Slow down when directed to do so by traffic signs or by a worker. The number one cause of work zone crashes is excessive speed. Observe all warning signs and drive the posted speed limit. If the speed limit sign is white with black numbers, the speed limit has been established by the Texas Transportation Commission and is enforceable regardless of whether there is any construction activity or not. And remember, *traffic fines double* in work zones when workers are present.

At 60 mph, a vehicle travels 88 feet per second. Even slowing to 40 mph, a vehicle covers more than 58 feet per second. Because work zones provide little room for maneuvering and virtually no margin for error, it is critical that drivers observe the posted speed limits.

Pay attention

Highway workers and heavy equipment will often be only a few feet from the vehicles passing through the work zone. Always be alert to changing road and traffic conditions; take note of warning devices and flaggers' directions, and prepare for the unexpected. Don't take driving conditions for granted.

Avoid distractions while in a work zone. For example, don't use cell phones, change radio stations, tapes or CDs, or refill your coffee cup. A moment of distraction may result in a crash that could claim someone's life.

Extra caution is required when driving in a work zone at night. Hazards are more difficult to recognize, sight distance for workers and drivers is very limited and road markings may be harder to see.

Remember that work zone conditions are fluid and can change from day-to-day. The location of active construction within a work zone can vary greatly. Don't assume that because there wasn't construction in an area yesterday, there won't be one there today.

Be patient

Traffic delays in work zones are sometimes unavoidable. Aggressive driving makes the situation more dangerous for everyone. Road construction and repair are necessary activities to ensure a safe, efficient highway system and to protect the investment of your tax dollars.

It only takes a little extra time to slow down for a work zone. At 50 mph instead of 60 mph, it takes less than one minute longer to get through a work zone two miles long; and less than 4 ½ minutes longer if the work zone is 10 miles long. The risk is not worth the few extra minutes it takes to get through a work zone.

Plan ahead

Anticipate events that can happen in work zones and be ready to respond quickly. Normal driving conditions don't always exist in work zones. Remember that a trip through a work zone may take longer. Leave a little earlier when planning your day to arrive at your destination on time.



Drive with caution, pay attention, be patient and plan ahead. Remember, we are working for you.

Motorists must understand that normal driving conditions don't exist in and around highway work zones.

Work zones are everywhere

TxDOT maintains more than 79,000 miles of highways, with over 1,000 projects under way at any given time. Motorists are likely to encounter a TxDOT work zone, on average, every 60-70 miles. When taking into account the work zones set up by cities and counties, the state is literally dotted with work zones on our highways and streets.



Because there are so many work zones, the need for attention to safe driving has never been greater. Remember, slow down, pay attention and drive Texas friendly.

Who are we?

TxDOT is responsible for building and maintaining the state highway system. We have no authority to cite vehicle violations of any kind. That jurisdiction falls under the Texas Department of Public Safety and local law enforcement authorities.

For more information

To learn more about TxDOT and work zones, contact your local TxDOT district office.

District	Phone	Address
Abilene	(325) 676-6800	4250 N. Clack
Amarillo	(806) 356-3200	5715 Canyon Dr.
Atlanta	(903) 796-2851	701 E. Main St.
Austin	(512) 832-7000	7901 N. I-35
Beaumont	(409) 898-5745	8350 Eastex Frwy.
Brownwood	(325) 646-2591	2495 US 183 N
Bryan	(979) 778-2165	1300 N. Texas Ave.
Childress	(940) 937-2571	7599 US 287
Corpus Christi	(361) 808-2300	1701 S. Padre Island Dr.
Dallas	(214) 320-6100	4777 E. US 80 (Mesquite)
El Paso	(915) 790-4200	13301 Gateway Blvd. West
Fort Worth	(817) 370-6500	2501 Southwest Loop
Houston	(713) 802-5000	7721 Washington Ave.
Laredo	(956) 712-7400	1817 Bob Bullock Loop
Lubbock	(806) 745-4411	135 Slaton Rd.
Lufkin	(936) 634-4433	1805 N. Timberland Dr.
Odessa	(432) 332-0501	3901 E. Highway 80
Paris	(903) 737-9300	1365 N. Main St.
Pharr	(956) 702-6100	600 W. US 83
San Angelo	(325) 944-1501	4502 Knickerbocker Rd.
San Antonio	(210) 615-1110	4615 NW Loop 410
Tyler	(903) 510-9100	2709 W. Front St.
Waco	(254) 867-2700	100 S. Loop Dr.
Wichita Falls	(940) 720-7700	1601 SW Pkwy.
Yoakum	(361) 293-4300	403 Huck St.

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