



State of Illinois
Bruce Rauner, Governor



Illinois Department of Transportation
Randall S. Blankenhorn, Acting Secretary

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Motorists Urged to ‘Expect the Unexpected’ in Work Zones this Construction Season in Illinois

Work Zone Safety Week Reminder: See Orange. Slow Down. Save Lives.

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Illinois State Police (ISP) and the Illinois Tollway were joined by their industry partners today to kick off National Work Zone Awareness Week with a reminder to all Illinois motorists: Expect the unexpected driving through work zones. To signal the start of construction season and call attention to the dangers of driving in work zones, Governor Bruce Rauner has signed a proclamation designating this week as “Work Zone Safety Week” in Illinois.

“Construction season is underway. That means crews will be out working on the roads, often times just a few feet away from traffic,” said Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn. “Please slow down and eliminate distractions while driving through work zones. The rules are very simple: See orange. Slow down. Save lives.”

The theme for this year’s National Work Zone Awareness Week is “Expect the Unexpected.” Whenever motorists are traveling through work zones, they need to be aware of sudden lane closures and shifts, the presence of construction equipment, changing traffic patterns and speeds, as well as a host of other factors that can make work zones potentially dangerous places. More than 4,300 motor vehicle crashes occur in Illinois work zones every year. Provisional data shows that 29 people, including three workers, were killed in Illinois work zone crashes in 2014.

“Construction work zones can be hazardous to motorists and workers alike,” said ISP Col. Mike Zerbonia. “Motorists should prepare for the unexpected by reducing speed and staying focused on the road ahead. Speeding and distracted driving in a work zone is a dangerous offense with tragic consequences.”



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Speed and inattentiveness are major contributors to work zone crashes. Workers are not the only ones at risk, either. Statistics show that approximately 90 percent of all work zone fatalities are motorists.

This year, IDOT will be expanding on the Smart Work Zone technology introduced last year. The system utilizes computers to relay travel times via digital message boards in advance of an interstate work zone so motorists are aware of any backups and can seek alternate routes. Speed indicator boards will be deployed again this year to increase awareness of work zone speed limits.

Illinois State Police also will continue to operate photo enforcement vans as another measure to reduce speeds in work zones. Signs are posted prior to motorists entering work zones where photo enforcement vans are stationed, with a speed indicator board above the van to give drivers one last chance to slow down.

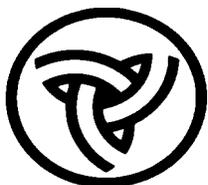
“With so much construction on the Illinois Tollway this year, it’s important for drivers traveling in work zones to use caution at all times,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur. “Tollway customers can avoid surprises in work zones by planning ahead and visiting our website for the latest project information and tools to help plan your trip.”

Fines for speeding in work zones are \$375 for first-time offenders and \$1,000 for a second offense, whether or not workers are present. If workers are present, motorists can lose their driver’s license for up to 90 days after a second violation. The penalty for hitting a worker is a fine up to \$10,000 and 14 years in prison.

In recent years, Illinois has adopted distracted driving laws that prohibit the use of all hand-held electronic devices while driving at all times, work zones included. The use of electronic communications devices or any other electronic device, to text, e-mail, compose, read or send electronic messages or access internet sites while driving a motor vehicle also is prohibited.

Visit www.embracetheorange.com to take the Work Zone Safety Pledge and learn more about work zones. You can view IDOT’s work zone safety public service announcements at <http://youtu.be/IrjB7WSZ7Zk> and <http://youtu.be/Ge4Z8ym3Eeg>

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