

Driving Zero Fatalities to a Reality

Partnering for Illinois



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Transportation Agencies Partner with State Police to Improve Safety, Reduce Crashes in Illinois Work Zones

Coalition Announces National Work Zone Awareness Week to "Drive Zero Fatalities to Reality"

CHICAGO - As the 2011 highway construction season gets under way, the Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Tollway, Illinois State Police, Local Laborers Union, Illinois Road and Transportation Builders Association and other highway safety partners joined today to announce their participation in National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 4-8. The multi-agency collaboration is part of an ongoing effort to improve awareness and reduce traffic related crashes, fatalities and injuries in Illinois work zones.

"As Illinois kick-starts its annual construction season, we want to ensure that motorists and workers protect themselves and others while traveling through work zones," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Gary Hannig. "The state experienced historic two-year lows in traffic fatalities in 2009 and 2010, which resulted in part from strategic partnerships, excellent engineering, impactful traffic safety campaigns, effective programs and consistent motorist compliance to state law. We strongly encourage all motorists to be alert for workers in these zones, slow down, buckle up, obey posted speed limits and drive free of distractions like cell phones and texting devices."

The 2011 construction season marks the second year distracted driving laws went into effect in Illinois. The distracted driving law prohibits the use of hand-held wireless telephones for all drivers, regardless of age, while operating a vehicle in a school or construction zone. In addition, 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 at any time is prohibited.

“This week, the Illinois Tollway is scheduled to begin work on the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway to extend the life of the 50-year-old roadway and ensure safe travel for our customers,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur. “While construction is under way, we remind drivers to slow down and stay alert in work zones and remember that texting while driving is always illegal when you're behind the wheel in Illinois.”

Speed and inattentiveness are major contributing factors to work zone crashes. In 2010, provisional data indicates that 28 fatal crashes occurred in work zones, in which 32 people died. Worker fatalities decreased from five in 2009 to three provisionally in 2010.

“Illinois State Police Troopers will strictly enforce work zone speed limits and the ‘move over’ law which requires motorists to slow down and, if possible, change lanes when approaching police, emergency or construction vehicles displaying flashing warning lights,” Interim Director Patrick Keen said. “We will also strictly enforce Distracted Driving laws which restrict the use of a cell phone in a construction zone and texting while driving.”

Under tougher work zone speeding fines that took effect in 2004, first-time offenders caught speeding in a work zone face a \$375 fine; second-time offenders face a \$1,000 fine and the loss of their driver’s license for 90 days. If a motorist hits a worker, they face a \$10,000 fine and up to 14 years in prison. Photo speed enforcement vans operated by State Police Troopers will be out in force again this year during construction season. Five vans will be active at various locations throughout the state. The work zone fines apply for photo speed enforcement.

“There were 32 work zone related deaths in 2010, three of which were workers and one of the three belonged to the Laborers family, Clifford Denson from Laborers' Local 159,” said John F. Penn, LIUNA Vice President and Midwest Regional Manager. “In honor of Clifford and all those who lost their lives in a work zone, let us all work together to bring zero fatalities to reality.”

See Orange. Slow Down. Save Lives! is IDOT’s work zone safety campaign to increase awareness and promote safety for workers and motorists. In an effort to reduce fatalities on roadways, Illinois has adopted an overall zero fatality goal as part of the Illinois Strategic Highway Safety Plan that includes a reduction in work zone related fatalities with measurable targeted reductions every year. *Driving Zero Fatalities to a Reality* is the message Illinois adopted to remind motorists that every life counts.

For more information regarding the National Work Zone Awareness Week or IDOT’s *See Orange. Slow Down. Save Lives!* campaign, please log on to www.dot.il.gov/safetyEng/wzawarenessweek.html

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