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Roadway Work Zone Safety

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Supervising Safety Newsletter

Summer is here and it seems like there is some type of road construction everywhere you go.

On average, 976 people are killed each year in work zone crashes in the United States. According to the Governors Highway Safety Association, all states have laws that increase the penalties for speeding or committing other traffic violations while in a construction work zone. The penalties often involve doubled fines, but also can be a fixed dollar amount. In some cases, the penalty is applicable only when workers are present and/or if signs are posted. Currently 33 states double the fine for speeding or other traffic violations in a work zone. Utah law requires that workers must be present in the construction zone and signs must be posted to alert drivers of enhanced penalties for the increased penalties to take effect.

We all are responsible for driving, walking, and biking safely through work zones. The engineers and planners have the responsibility to make sure the work zone is designed and operating properly—with safety in mind. Drivers and pedestrians have the responsibility to always be alert and obey the traffic laws. The police and the courts have the responsibility to make sure that the traffic and work zone laws are enforced. Public safety agencies have the responsibility of responding to and securing crash locations and enforcing traffic laws. Local communities and county and state governments need to allocate funding for safe roads and increase public awareness about work zone safety. Everyone should take responsibility for work zone safety.

Tips for driving safely in work zones:

- Expect the unexpected. Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be changed, and people may be working on or near the road.
- Slow down. Speeding is one of the major causes of work zone crashes.
- Don't tailgate. Keep a safe distance between you and

the car ahead of you. The most common crash in a highway work zone is the rear end collision.

- Keep your distance. Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and the construction workers and their equipment.
- Pay attention to the signs. The warning signs are there to help you and other drivers move safely through the work zone. Observe the posted signs until you see the one that says, "End Work Zone."
- Obey road crew flaggers. The flagger knows what is best for moving traffic safely in the work zone. A flagger has the same authority as a regulatory sign, so you can be cited for disobeying his or her directions.
- Stay alert and minimize distractions. Dedicate your full attention to the roadway and avoid changing radio stations or using cell phones while driving.
- Keep up with the traffic flow. Motorists can help maintain traffic flow and posted speeds by merging as soon as possible. Don't drive right up to the lane closure and then try to barge in.
- Expect delays. Schedule enough time to drive safely and check radio, TV and web sites for traffic information.
- Be patient and stay calm. The work zone crew members are working to improve the road and make your future drive better.

Utah Safety Council

