

# Work/Construction Zones

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A work zone is an area where roadwork takes place and may involve lane closures, detours and moving equipment. Highway work zones are set up according to the type of road and the work to be done on the road. The work zone can be long or short term and can exist at anytime of the year, but most commonly in the summer.

Work zones on U.S. highways have become increasingly dangerous places for both workers and drivers. There are a large number of work zones in place across America, therefore, highway agencies are working on not only improving communication used in work zones, but to change the behavior of drivers so crashes can be prevented.

According to the National Safety Council, over 100 road construction workers are killed in construction zones each year. Nearly half of these workers are killed as a result of being struck by motor vehicles.

The number of construction zone injuries and fatalities are predicted to climb even higher. Increased funding for road construction during recent years has led to a significant increase in the number of highway construction projects around the country. Increased speed limits, impatient drivers, and widespread traffic congestion have led to an overall increase in work zone injuries and fatalities.

The top 10 states with motorist fatalities in work zones in 2008 are as follows:

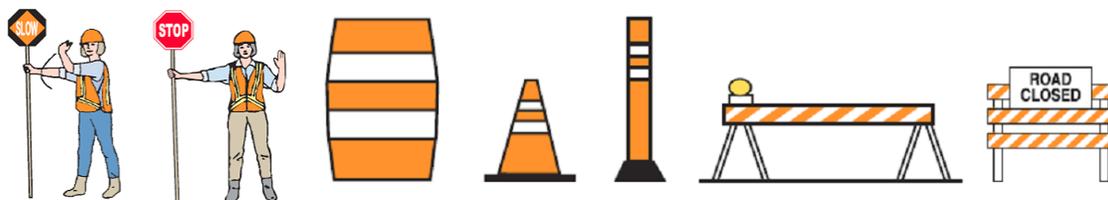
- |                  |   |                      |
|------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. Texas—134     |  | 6. Pennsylvania—23   |
| 2. Florida—81    |   | 7. Louisiana—22      |
| 3. California—70 |   | 8. North Carolina—21 |
| 4. Georgia—36    |   | 9. Arkansas—19       |
| 5. Illinois—31   |   | 10. Missouri—18      |

Source: FARS

## Work Zone Safety

In work zones, traffic may be controlled by a person with a sign or flag to tell you which direction to travel, to slow down or stop. You must follow these instructions.

Barriers, such as drums, cones and tubes (panels) are used to keep traffic out of hazardous work zones. Along with signs and road markings, they guide you safely through the work zone. Barriers may be used to keep drivers from entering closed roads or other areas where it is dangerous to drive. Temporary traffic signals may be used in work zones. You may see a warning sign showing a symbol of a traffic signal. Stop at the white line, if present.





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## **Speeding in Work Zones Causes Injuries and Fatalities**

When approaching a work zone watch for cones, barrels, signs, large vehicles, or workers in bright colored vests to warn you and direct you where to go. All temporary signs in work zones have an orange background and black letters or symbols and tell you what to do, how soon you will encounter the work zone and the speed limit through the work zone. The reduced speed limits are necessary for the safety of the workers and motorists. If there are no reduced speed limit signs, you should obey the normal posted speed limit.

As a driver, you should learn and abide by the following safety tips for driving in work zones:

- Watch the traffic around you and be prepared to react by reducing your speed, obeying signs and flaggers and increasing your following distance.
- Do not become oblivious to work zone signs when the work is long term or widespread and be aware that traffic patterns in work zones can change daily including lane shifts or alternating lane closures.
- If traffic is light and speeds are still relatively high, merge early. If congestion increases, traffic slows down and gaps between cars close up, merge late and use the “zipper” method.
- Use extreme caution when driving through a work zone at night whether workers are present or not.
- Adjust your lane position away from the side where workers and equipment are located when possible.
- Some work zones are mobile and moving, such as when line painting, road patching or mowing are occurring. Just because you do not see the workers immediately after you see the warning sign does not mean they are not out there. Observe the posted signs until you see the one that says “End Road Work.”
- Expect delays, plan for them and leave early to reach your destination on time.
- When you can, avoid work zones altogether by using alternate routes.

Information for this fact sheet was derived from:  
ADTSEA Curriculum version 2.0  
AAMVA Model Driver Manual