**Work Zone Safety Week**

**Newsletter Article/Website Post**

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**Roadside Workers Ahead? Slow Down and Pay Attention for Them**

Excess speed and distractions are always risky when you are behind the wheel, but never more so than in work zones.

Preliminary data shows between 2018 and 2022, 44 people died and 3,682 more were injured in work zone traffic crashes in Minnesota. In 2021, the most recent year for which national data is available, 956 people died in work zones, according to National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) data. Also in 2021, 108 highway worker occupational fatalities occurred in road construction sites, based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Given a record warm winter, road repair and other roadside projects are already getting underway in Minnesota. That means it’s time to brush up on your work zone driving skills.

* Reduce speed while traveling through work zones, paying close attention to signs and signals.
* Be aware of vehicles around you, especially commercial vehicles.
* Be sure to pay close attention to road workers and flaggers – give them extra room, always slow when approaching them, and be prepared to stop if necessary.
* When approaching lane closures, use the zipper merge technique – be attentive to vehicles around you and potential blind spots.
* Rear-end crashes are common in work zones – obey all speeds, avoid distractions, and always maintain extra space (at least 3 seconds) between your vehicle and the one in front of you.

Be sure to pay close attention in work zones when trucks and other commercial vehicles are sharing the road. Fatal work zone crashes involving commercial vehicles increased significantly in 2021 — from 210 fatal crashes in 2020 to 291 in 2021. This 39% increase is in stark contrast to the 2% increase in fatal work zone crashes involving other types of vehicles. Work zones present many challenges for trucks and buses – narrow lanes, sudden stops, traffic pattern shifts, and uneven road surfaces require all drivers to stay alert. In fact, large trucks are over represented in work zone crashes, making up [nearly one-third of fatal work zone crashes](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/docs/Large%20Trucks%20and%20Buses%20by%20the%20Numbers.pdf), according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The Minnesota Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (MN NETS) is marking Work Zone Safety Week April 15-19, 2024, with new educational resources on [DriveSafeMN](https://drivesafemn.org/work-zone-safety/) along with its ongoing Do It for ME/Do It for THEM campaign material to support your traffic safety initiatives now and throughout the year.