SAFETY BRIEFS
CTI Technology Transfer Center

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

Educating your Residents on Work Zone Safety

Keeping a work zone safe and efficient can be very difficult. Although your department can control much of what goes into a successful work zone – proper design, adequate signage, certified flaggers – there is one thing that is beyond your control…the drivers moving through your work zone. This safety brief is intended to provide you with information to help you educate your residents on the important role they play in keeping work zones safe.

Statistics:

More than 40,000 people are injured in America's work zones each year. In 2008, there were 720 work zone related fatalities in the United States. That works out to be one fatality every 10 hours and an injury every 13 minutes. (FHWA) Four out of every five of those fatalities was a driver or passenger. In Connecticut, there have been more than 37 work zone related fatalities since 2000.

Connecticut Work Zone Fatalities since 2000	
Year	#of Fatalities
2000	8
2001	4
2002	1
2003	7
2004	5
2005	4
2006	2
2007	2
2008	4
(source: The National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse website - http://www.workzonesafety.org/crash_data/)	

The most prevalent causes of work zone related incidents are inattention, following too closely, exceeding the speed limit (or driving too fast for conditions) and improper lane usage or lane change (CT DOT)

Why is this important?

Local crews and contractors need to work in the right of way in order to maintain our infrastructure and improve critical services. Many times, this requires lane restrictions where crews and drivers need to share the road. Work zones must be equipped with proper signage and appropriate guidance so that motorists are properly warned of the changes to the travel way. It is imperative that motorists follow this guidance in order to avoid crashes and injuries.

Pay extra attention:

The most dangerous part of the work zone is the transition area – the areas leading into and out of the work zone. More than 80% of crashes occur in these areas. When entering a work zone, drivers should merge early. Waiting until the last moment to find a place to merge causes increased congestion and increases the likelihood of quick stops and crashes. When exiting a work zone, drivers should pay extra attention to their mirrors. Aggressive drivers may seek to gain position by accelerating quickly out of the work zone, passing quickly on either the right or the left.

Summary:

Knowing about the special hazards in a work zone will help your residents to be more aware of their safety and yours. Share the information and share the responsibility.

Work Zone Safety Tips for Residents:

When you first see work zone signage:

- **Slow down** and adjust your speed to accommodate the upcoming situation. Remember to allow yourself extra time if you have to drive through a work zone – getting there safely is more important than getting there quickly.
- **Follow the instructions** provided by signs, signals and flaggers. They are there to help everyone stay safe.
- **Don't follow too closely** – the car in front of you may need to stop suddenly. A large percentage of work zone crashes involve "rear-end" collisions. Allow 3 seconds between you and the car ahead of you.
- **Drive defensively** – expect aggressive drivers to cut in front of you – it might be safer to let them in rather than battling them for position.
- **Pay attention to road conditions** – road work frequently requires changes to the road surface. Be watchful for rough pavement, drop offs or other conditions that may affect your ability to control your vehicle.
- **Use your mirrors and turn signals** to communicate your movements and intentions and check for other vehicles.
- **Allow plenty of room for workers.** In many situations, crews are working very close to the travel way. Remember that your side mirrors stick out beyond the width of your car. Do not try to squeeze by someone taking a left in a work zone. Your mirror may injure a worker.

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