Speeding Vehicle Kills Flagger

Theresa Newman, a flagger working at a road construction site on a British Columbia highway, knew she was in a dangerous spot. Just five nights earlier, a car had crashed into the work zone's arrow board.

Safety officers were coming in a few days to inspect the site, but Theresa knew the contractor had complied with all the requirements. There was ample distance between the warning signs, and a message board warning motorists to reduce speed was set up 300 meters from the construction zone.

Still, Theresa, a 43-year-old single mom of two youngsters, felt vulnerable. It was 11 at night. There wasn't very much traffic, but she softly shuddered with every passing vehicle. She didn't have time to do much else when a Chevrolet Camaro suddenly screeched into the work zone. It slammed into a parked vehicle, hit Theresa, then crashed into a dump truck and back hoe. Theresa was pronounced dead at the scene.

The Camaro's driver – who suffered only minor injuries – was arrested for criminal negligence causing death and impaired driving causing death.

COULD THIS DEATH HAVE BEEN PREVENTED?

Deaths like Theresa's happen all too frequently. Day or night, traffic control workers are endangered by motorists. To shield workers from intruding vehicles, it's been recommended that employers use:

- Protective barriers;
- Alarm systems to alert workers of a work zone intrusion;
- Speed bumps on roadways in highway construction work zones; or
- Law enforcement vehicles to help alert vehicle traffic to work zones.

Could Theresa have done anything to save her life? It's hard to say. But flaggers – or anyone working near traffic – should stay alert, face traffic and have an escape route planned in case they need to move quickly.