Work Zone / Traffic Control



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

There are sobering statistics involving work zone accidents and the risk to workers. Effective, rigorous work zone and traffic control planning, designing, supervising, implementation, inspection, and maintenance is the answer to solve work zone safety issues.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Workers in temporary traffic control work zones are exposed to injury from **construction vehicles and motorized equipment.**

- operating in and around the active work zone(s)
- operating in traffic control or secondary areas that support the work zone
- entering and leaving the work zone

Workers in the roadway are also at risk of injury from a variety of **general traffic vehicles** entering the work zone, such as:

- drunk drivers
- sleepy or impaired drivers
- impatient, reckless drivers
- drivers using cell phones or other inattentive drivers
- law enforcement and emergency vehicles
- disabled vehicles pulling in and parking
- lost drivers looking for directions

EXAMPLE:

An inattentive driver rear-ended this attenuator truck at 63 mph, despite workers' attempts to get the driver's attention. Two workers were hurt and the driver received minor injuries.

The driver pled guilty to reckless endangerment of a roadway worker.

OTHER RISKS

A. Cell Phones

- Surveys have found that 40% of drivers operating their vehicles in construction zones were using their phones which resulted in traffic accidents.

B. Workers on foot

Flaggers and other workers-on-foot (refers to any pedestrian worker on the ground in the work zone) are exposed to several risks, including being hit if they are not visible to motorists or equipment operators.

C. Equipment Operator

- Workers who operate construction vehicles or motorized equipment have an increased risk of injury due to rollovers, collisions, and being caught between or struck by operating equipment.
- According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS), 844 worker deaths occurred in roadway work zones from 1995-2002 in the United States.
- From 1997-2003, there were 120 deaths/year on average in the United States.

D. Hazard / Problems at Night

Visibility is greatly reduced at night and your risk of getting injured or even killed increases in the dark. Drivers are more tired, sleepy, and less attentive.

- poor visibility
- glare off lights
- adverse weather conditions
- tired drivers
- inattentive workers

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

TRAFFIC CONTROL PLAN

It enables motorists to move safety through and around roadway zones for the protection of the public and workers.

It makes use of:

- traffic control devices
- standard signage
- buffer and
- transition zones.

In the **Temporary Traffic Control** zone, construction vehicles and equipment create a risk to workers on foot requiring additional protection planning and policies to minimize backing-up maneuvers in the “activity area.”

The **Temporary Traffic Control “Activity Area”** is the section of the highway where the work activity takes place. It is comprised of:

- **work space**
- **the traffic space**
- **buffer space.**

The **“work space”** is the portion of the road closed and set aside for equipment, workers, and materials. Work spaces are usually separated from the traffic space with channeling devices or temporary barriers and signs. This protects both vehicles and pedestrians.

Other important components of a **Temporary Traffic Control Plan** are:

- Restrict personnel access points into work areas and define/designate “no backing zones” and “pedestrian-free zones.”
- Design into the **Temporary Traffic Control Plan** flow paths for equipment and vehicle traffic to minimize backing maneuvers where possible. There should also be buffer spaces to protect pedestrian workers from straying traffic vehicles and/or work zone equipment.
- Establish procedures for entering and exiting the work zone.
- Train all employees on the **Temporary Traffic Control Plan** and its precautionary measures.

Protective measures within the **Traffic Control Plan** for employers and workers.

Employers:

- Must conduct crew meeting and train all workers on work zone safety.
- Discuss potential hazards, equipment blind spots and movement precautions in the activity zone.
- Comprehensive site – specific safety program.
- Temporary traffic control plan in place for the project site.

Workers:

- Wear high-visibility safety apparel (vest and head gear).
- Be alert for construction vehicles, equipment, and general traffic.
- Check surroundings often for hazards.
- Know the plan for traffic flow.
- Keep a safe distance from traffic.
- Communicate with other workers, especially when there are changes in procedures, locations, or traffic flow pattern.
- Stay behind the protective barriers.
- If you do not have a reason for being there, do not linger or cross into areas around moving equipment.
- Use extra precautions and additional safety apparel at night and during poor weather conditions.

Pedestrian Workers:

- Keep operators who are working near moving equipment in eye contact.
- Remember equipment blind spots and limited visual areas.

Equipment / Vehicle Operators:

- Keep windows and mirrors clean.
- Watch for workers on foot and know where they are located.
- Remember equipment blind spots and limited visual areas.

FINAL WORD

Motorists, employers, workers and general public must appreciate that work zones on public roads and highways are fraught with danger. Vigilance and due care must always be exercised at all times.