

Communicating Work Zone Information To Truckers in North Carolina

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North Carolina Department of Transportation

FACT SHEET

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Commercial truck drivers in North Carolina are not likely to be surprised when they come across a highway construction zone. That's because the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) works to provide timely and accurate work zone information to commercial drivers and the trucking industry. Over the past few years, NCDOT has implemented work zone information efforts focused on trucks to help reduce the number of commercial vehicle crashes occurring on their roads.

Ensuring that truck drivers receive accurate and timely information about work zones is important for several of reasons: safety, mobility, and reliability. Because of its size and weight, a work zone incident involving a truck can be more dangerous than with other vehicles. Providing truck drivers with information about an approaching work zone alerts them to the extra need to pay attention and be prepared to slow down or change lanes, and can minimize overall congestion. Furthermore, truck drivers often must meet tight delivery schedules, facing the risk of spoiled goods or dissatisfied customers if they do not make deliveries on time. Information about an approaching work zone and alternate routes may help commercial drivers better plan their routes.

Selecting the Proper Distribution Channels

Since truckers are often only passing through an area, normal channels for distributing work zone information to passenger vehicle drivers may not be as effective. NCDOT has been successful in getting information to the trucking industry by focusing its efforts on distribution channels that truckers use on a regular basis. These distribution channels include trucking industry and association print and online publications; truck/rest stops; and CB, satellite, and commercial radio.

For specific projects, NCDOT provides construction information to drivers through its statewide public information program for construction projects, known as IMPACT (Information Management Public Affairs, Construction and Traffic Control). The IMPACT program finds that a company's dispatcher/safety officer is the best conduit for disseminating information to the company's drivers. For independent drivers, information is best disseminated at rest areas and truck stops.

Partnerships with Trucking Associations

NCDOT distributes project information to truckers through the North Carolina Trucking Association (NCTA) and the American Automobile Association. Generally this information is distributed via flyers that detail general project information, detour routes, wide load detours, and road closings. The NCDOT IMPACT program has written articles about specific projects, and has found NCTA is willing to include them in trucking industry publications.

Providing Information at Truck Stops/Rest Stops

NCDOT has also distributed project fliers at truck stops, rest areas and welcome centers across North Carolina. NCDOT has found that truck stops and rest stops along highways can be effective places to distribute work zone information to the trucking industry, especially to independent drivers who may not get information through association or corporate channels. The stop does not necessarily have to be in close vicinity to the work zone. Information can be distributed well in advance if the stop is along the same route as the work zone.



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Using Radio Communications

CB, satellite, and commercial radio can all be used to provide work zone information to truck drivers. NCDOT learned through discussions with trucking industry representatives that some drivers are more likely to use satellite radio than CB radio. Some satellite radio broadcasting companies even have dedicated trucker channels.

Educating and Informing the Trucking Industry about Work Zones

Through its Work Zone Safety Program (WZSP), NCDOT works to provide the trucking industry with general education and information about driving safely through work zones. These efforts include:

- **Attending trade shows** where truck drivers are the primary audience. The WZSP has set up booths at trade shows and provided information about safe driving in work zones, as well as information about current and upcoming projects.
- **Developing a public service announcement** to encourage truck drivers to drive safely through work zones and to inform other motorists to be cautious when driving near a truck in a work zone.
- **Developing an educational video.** The WZSP is working with the Carolinas Associated General Contractors and the NCTA to develop an educational video for distribution to the trucking industry. This five- to six-minute instructional tape may be used by trucking companies as a safety/educational video. NCDOT also plans to distribute the video to truck stops, truck driving schools, and the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles.
- **Forming an industry focus group.** In order to effectively reach the intended audience for the video, the WZSP formed a focus group that included members of the NCTA. Working with the focus group enabled the WZSP to develop the video content and better communicate with the trucking industry.

What Are Other States Doing?

For one specific road project along I-95, the **Virginia DOT** provided daily project updates to the American Trucking Associations (ATA) and the Virginia Trucking Association. **Michigan DOT** (MDOT) places information kiosks at rest areas, weigh stations, and truck stops to promote alternate routes when major road and lane closures are scheduled. In the case of work zones located near businesses, MDOT coordinates with local manufacturers to provide information to their suppliers about the construction. MDOT's goal is to help suppliers plan for alternate routes and to allow more time for deliveries if needed. The **Oregon DOT** distributes project specific work zone information to members of the Oregon Trucking Associations via <http://www.ortrucking.org/safety.htm>. This Web site provides "Before You Go" information that includes road closures, restrictions, delays, and detours. Additionally, several States have studied the **CB Wizard Alert System**, a device that continuously broadcasts a message over CB radio to alert approaching drivers of a work zone ahead. The majority of results from these studies have been positive and indicated that the system can be an effective and easy means of providing commercial vehicle operators advance warning of unusual highway and traffic conditions.

"The trucking industry is receptive to our informational efforts—provided they are to the point. They have given us help with feedback on our efforts and are genuinely interested in improving highway safety."

Michelle Long
Construction Programs Engineer
NCDOT

"Information sent to state trucking associations is probably the best and quickest way to reach the industry. Information can be disseminated, even at short notice, to notify truckers as to when and where road work will take place."

Gail Toth
NJ Motor Truck
Association

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