

## NATIONAL WORK ZONE AWARENESS WEEK

April 11-15, 2016



# DON'T BE THAT DRIVER

The theme for the 2016 National Work Zone Awareness Week, which will be held April 11-15, is "Don't Be That Driver!" National Work Zone Awareness Week (NWZAW) began in 1999 when the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) joined forces to increase public awareness of work-zone safety issues. In 2000, it became a national event and awareness has grown ever since, with the majority of State agencies and other organizations sponsoring high-visibility education and outreach initiatives.



### THIS YEAR'S THEME: DON'T BE THAT DRIVER.

We've all seen the headlines: "Distracted Driver Blamed in Fatal Crash," "Officers Struggle to Enforce Texting While Driving Laws" or "Speed-related Crash Kills Five in Construction Zone." This year's theme "Don't Be That Driver!" reinforces the message that driving in and around work zones requires motorists to constantly be alert and be prepared for changes – changes that a distracted driver may not notice in time to prevent a potentially fatal crash. A driver distracted by an activity other than driving, such as eating, grooming, or using a mobile device, is up to four times more likely to be involved in a crash.<sup>1</sup>

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. There are three main types of distraction:

- **Visual** – taking your eyes off the road.
- **Manual** – taking your hands off the wheel.
- **Cognitive** – taking your mind off what you are doing.

Driver-related factors that affect work zone crashes include speeding, in-vehicle distractions and inattentive or aggressive driving. The most

frequently occurring type of work zone crash is a rear-end collision, so paying constant attention to traffic ahead and maintaining an adequate following distance is important in avoiding them. Cell phone use increases the rate of rear-end collisions, decreases brake time by 18 percent, and causes a 25 percent increase in erratic driving.<sup>2</sup> In 2014, distracted driving was a factor in 16 percent of fatal crashes in work zones, while speeding was a factor in 29 percent.

Work zones are dynamic places that can change from minute to minute. The presence of trucks (including construction vehicles), flaggers and queues, combined with reduced speed limits create an environment where being alert is critical. When motorists are alert, obey traffic control devices such as signs and pavement markings, maintain the posted speed limit and pay attention to traffic patterns, everyone's safety is enhanced.

Visit the **FHWA Work Zone Management** web site at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/workzones> for access to useful resources, guidance, and training.

<sup>1</sup> N.J. Medeiros-Ward, "The Science of Distracted Driving," Car-Talk Blog, Utah Applied Cognition Laboratory. Available at: <http://www.cartalk.com/content/science-distracted-driving> (accessed January 29, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Strayer, D.L. and F.A. Drews, "Effects of cell phone conversations on younger and older drivers," Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society 47th Annual Meeting, pp. 1860-1864 (2003).



## WORKING SMARTER: THE EVERY DAY COUNTS SMARTER WORK ZONES INITIATIVE

Smarter Work Zones (SWZ) are among a few select initiatives being promoted by the third round of the FHWA Every Day Counts (EDC-3) Initiative. SWZ use innovative strategies to minimize travel delays, ensure motorist and worker safety, maintain access to local businesses and residences and complete road work on time. In EDC-3, the focus is on **coordinating construction projects** to reduce work zone impacts and **using technology applications** to dynamically manage traffic in the work zone environment.

The goal of project coordination is to minimize work zone impacts and produce time and cost savings. Technology applications focus on such

proven safety and mobility measures as real-time traveler information, queue warning, dynamic lane merge, incident management, variable speed limits, automated enforcement, entering/exiting construction vehicle notification and performance measurement.

**Want to learn more?** There are many options for getting involved: webinars, self-paced web-based training, FHWA-led peer exchanges, or FHWA-led workshops. For more information on current offerings and upcoming events, visit <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc-3/swz.cfm>.

## WORK ZONE FATALITIES ARE UP: SOME STATISTICS

The heavy and civil engineering construction industries are losing up to \$3.5 billion annually due to fatalities and injuries, including work zone crashes. In 2014, a total of 669 fatalities<sup>3</sup>—the highest since 2009—occurred in work zones, representing an increase of more than 13 percent from 2013. In addition, 30 percent of these fatal crashes involved one or more trucks.<sup>4</sup> FHWA held a large-truck symposium in 2015 to further define the safety challenges related to large trucks traveling through work zones and to identify ways that work zone design and technology solutions can mitigate them.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1. Work Zone Fatalities in the United States, 2005-2014.**



Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS): 2005-2013 FARS Final data and 2014 FARS ARF

We should all be aware that many work zone crashes do not involve drivers alone; there were 116 worker fatalities in and around work zones in 2014, a 9% increase from 2013.<sup>6</sup> The leading cause of death in the road and bridge construction sector is worker

runovers, backovers, and falls. Such incidents are often preventable if workers are properly trained and follow established safety practices. For information on work zone training, visit the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse website at: <https://www.workzonesafety.org/>.

Despite the recent increase in fatalities, work zone fatalities have fallen by 23 percent since 1999. In 2014 (the most recent available data):

- Driver and vehicle passengers accounted for **82** percent of work zone fatalities;
- **669** work zone traffic-related fatalities occurred (up 13 percent from 2013), with 46 crashes involving multiple fatalities;
- **31,251** work zone injuries occurred (a 9 percent increase from 2013);
- **116** worker fatalities occurred (a 9 percent increase from 2013); and
- **246** large trucks and buses (235 large trucks, 11 buses) were involved in fatal crashes in work zones (a 27 percent increase from 2013).<sup>7</sup>

There is still a great deal of work to be done as we move toward zero deaths on our Nation's roadways, and FHWA and its partner agencies must continue to focus on developing resources, tools, and technologies that will create safer and more efficient work zones.

<sup>3</sup> Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) 2014 Annual Report File (ARF).

<sup>4</sup> FMCSA, "Large Truck and Bus Crash Facts 2013," FMCSA-RRA-15-004 (Washington, DC: FMCSA, April 2015). Available at: <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety/data-and-statistics/large-truck-and-bus-crash-facts-2013> (accessed January 29, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> National Symposium on Work Zones and Large Trucks, April 13, 2015, in Jacksonville, FL. Available at: [https://www.workzonesafety.org/meetings-and-events/wz\\_conferences/large\\_trucks\\_symposium\\_2015/](https://www.workzonesafety.org/meetings-and-events/wz_conferences/large_trucks_symposium_2015/) (accessed February 26, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. See also, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), "Highway Work Zone Safety" at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/highwayworkzones/default.html> (accessed January 29, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> 2005-2013 FARS Final and 2014 FARS ARF.

