

Instructor Notes: Roadway construction work zones are very common and have become increasingly dangerous places for both construction workers and drivers. Take few minutes during this month's safety meeting to discuss the importance of driving safely through construction zones and to expect the unexpected.

Safety Meeting 2015 #8 – Safety in Construction Zones

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According to the National Safety Council, over 100 road construction workers are killed in construction zones each year and nearly half of these workers are killed as a result of being struck by motor vehicles. Unfortunately, the number of construction zone injuries and fatalities are predicted to climb even higher due to increased funding for more road construction projects throughout the country. To make matters worse, increased speed limits, impatient drivers and wide spread traffic congestion has led to an overall increase of work zone injuries and fatalities.

We all know that road construction is frustrating, but what can we do? One idea is to consider the three “Ss” of managing work zones safely: Speed, Space and Stress. Handle these three factors and you’re almost home free.

Manage Your Speed

Pay attention to advance warning construction signs (orange background with black letters), cones, barrels and barricades as you approach a roadway construction zone and *slow down*. You shouldn’t be surprised when you enter a construction zone and everything grinds to a screeching halt. Plan for the worst and expect it.

Be on the lookout for a “flagger” and follow their directions. In some cases they will signal direction to travel, remind you to slow down and when to stop.

Follow posted speed limits, especially within construction zones, and adjust your speed for weather

conditions. If there are no reduced speed limits in the construction zone, you should obey the normal posted speed limit but remain cautious. Don’t resume normal speed until you see roadway signs indicating it’s safe to do so.

Some construction zone speed limits are effective whether you see workers or not because of the physical hazards present such as lane shifts or lane reductions.

Nearly all states (49 out of 50) have laws that increase the penalties for speeding while in a construction zone. Thirty three states will *double* the fine.

Manage Your Space

The most common construction zone accident is a rear-end collision. Leave adequate braking distance between your vehicle and the one ahead of you. Count out at least two seconds (*one-one thousand, two-one thousand*) from the time the vehicle ahead of you passes an object and the time your own truck passes that object.

Leave yourself a way out. When stopped in traffic, leave a safety zone between you and the vehicle in front of you. A good rule of thumb is that when stopped in traffic you should be able to see the bottom of the tires of the vehicle in front of you.

Manage the side clearance of your tow truck and the vehicle you are towing by adjusting your lane position as needed. Keep a safe distance between your truck and roadway workers, especially at night and during stormy weather when visibility is compromised.

If you see a “Lane Closed Ahead” sign, merge well before your lane ends when you have the time and space. Don’t speed up and try to cut in at the last moment. You don’t like it when other people do it, so why would you – especially when your towing company’s name and number are sprawled across your truck. Be polite and professional.

Manage Your Stress

Keep your cool. Calm down, and don’t rush. Remember, road construction is not a personal inconvenience to you. It is necessary to improve the roads for everyone.

Pay attention. Avoid distractions such as texting, eating, phone calls, radios, daydreaming or anything that would draw your attention away from driving.

Expect delays. Leave a bit earlier if necessary to arrive at your destination on time. Consider using an alternate route that bypasses the construction zones.

Closing Thought

When you can, avoid roadway construction zones all together by using alternate routes. If you can’t use an alternate route remember: “When you see orange, give ‘em a brake.” Construction workers are often just inches from your truck and just like you, they want to return home safely after each day’s work.

If you need any ideas on how to prepare and present this information to your drivers, please call me at 847-894-0042 or email me at pgratz548@comcast.net.