

TDOT Encourages Teens to "Get in the Zone"

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TDOT continually strives to provide safe, quality roads and bridges for Tennessee motorists. Improving this roadway system often requires construction and maintenance activities which can place both the men and women working in these areas and the drivers who travel through highway work zones at risk.

April 2-6 is designated as Work Zone Awareness Week in Tennessee and across the nation, but it's a topic TDOT considers throughout the year. We are always looking at ways to improve highway work zone safety for both the men and women who work in these areas and the motorists who travel through them.

Work zones are considered one of the most hazardous places for workers, but they can be even more dangerous for drivers, particularly young, inexperienced ones. Statistics show us that teen drivers have higher rates of fatal crashes than any other age group. We also know that every three days a teenager is killed and seven are injured in a work zone crash in this country.

So this year, in conjunction with Work Zone Awareness Week, TDOT is formally launching a new work zone safety program for high school students called Get in the Zone.

The Get in the Zone program is geared toward high school students who are just learning or are thinking about learning to drive. Get in the Zone is offered by TDOT to Tennessee high schools at no cost and includes a high-tech, interactive presentation that teaches young drivers about the dangers of driving through work zones and provides them with tips on how to be safe when driving in these areas. The goal of the program is to reduce the number of young drivers involved in dangerous work zone crashes.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for American teenagers and studies show young drivers are more likely to be involved in work zone crashes than other age group. Here in Tennessee, in 2004, approximately 245 drivers, ages 16 and 17, were involved in work zone crashes. That number is down slightly from 2003 when the Department of Safety recorded more than 350 traffic crashes involving 16 and 17 year olds in Tennessee work zones, two of which were fatal crashes.

More than one thousand Tennessee high school students have already participated in Get in the Zone presentations and more than one thousand Tennessee high schools have been provided with Get in the Zone materials for classroom use.

The young people who participate in Get in the Zone gain a greater appreciation for the responsibilities that come with driving, and the knowledge they need to safely travel through work zones, protecting themselves as well as the men and women who work along our roadways.

To find out how to bring Get in the Zone to a high school in your area, visit our website at: www.tn.gov/tdot/wzsafety/ or contact: Christin Hayes, (615) 741-7929 or Christin.Hayes@state.tn.us