



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1401 EAST BROAD STREET
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-2000

David S. Ekern, P.E.
COMMISSIONER

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Dear Editor:

Every year in the United States more highway workers are killed than police and firefighters, combined. There is no question that highway construction is among the most dangerous professions. However, work zones can be even more dangerous for motorists – particularly young, inexperienced drivers. Statistics show that motorists comprise four out of five of all deaths in highway work zones.

Nearly 1,100 men, women and children are killed in work zones nationwide each year. In 2005 there were 2,278 crashes, 1,187 injuries and 14 deaths in Virginia work zones alone. This averages more than six crashes and three injuries every day. These deaths include Department of Transportation employees, contractors and motorists.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is committed to reducing these injuries and deaths. In addition to recognizing Work Zone Awareness Week each year in April for the past 10 years, VDOT and volunteers from the Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance began bringing the message of driving safely through work zones to thousands of high school driver education classes in 2003. More than 79,000 of our youngest drivers have heard this message since over the last four years.

This year we will observe Work Zone Awareness Week in conjunction with National Work Zone Awareness Week April 2-6.

Everyone plays a role in keeping work zones safe. For motorists, these three steps can mean the difference between life and death.

- When you see the orange signs, be alert for changing conditions ahead.
- Slow down and expect the unexpected. Pay attention to your surroundings. You may encounter lane shifts, construction vehicles entering and leaving the roadway, or changed speed limits.
- Minimize distractions! Avoid changing radio stations and using mobile phones while driving in the work zone.

We continue to look for innovative ways to safeguard motorists and highway work crews in work zones. We accelerate construction when possible and adjust schedules to do work during off-peak travel times. We use prefabricated components to quickly make road repairs and minimize work zones. We design work zones with safety as a top priority. And, we close roads and tunnels during off-peak hours to complete construction and maintenance more quickly. Yet, crashes continue to take lives every year. We will do our part to keep Virginia moving. We need your help to keep our work zones safe.

To find out more about driving safely through work zones, visit www.VirginiaDOT.org.

Sincerely,
David

David S. Ekern, P.E.