

Survival in Work Zones: Ten Tips for Driving Safely in Work Zones

1. In any work zone along any road, major or minor, **Expect the Unexpected!** Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be changed, and people and vehicles may be working on or near the road.
2. Diamond-shaped orange warning signs are generally posted in advance of road construction projects. **Slow down! Be alert! Pay attention to the signs!**
3. In addition to other warning signs, a “flagger ahead” warning sign may be posted in the work zone. When you see this, stay alert and be prepared to obey the flagger’s directions. In a work zone, a flagger has the same authority as a regulatory sign, so you can be cited for disobeying his or her directions.
4. Calm down. Work zones aren’t there to personally inconvenience you. They’re necessary to improve the roads for everyone.
5. You may see flashing arrow panels or “lane closed ahead” signs. Merge as soon as possible. Don’t zoom right up to the lane closure, then try to barge in - if everyone cooperates, traffic moves more efficiently. Motorists can help maintain traffic flow and posted speeds by moving to the appropriate lane at first notice of an approaching work zone.
6. Slow down when the signs say to. A car traveling 60 m.p.h. travels 88 feet per second. If you’re going 60mph, and you pass a sign that says “Road Work 1500 feet,” you’ll be in that work zone in 17 seconds.
7. The most common crash in a highway work zone is the rear-end collision, so remember to leave two seconds of braking distance between you and the car in front of you. The amount of space required to provide two seconds of stopping time will increase the faster you’re driving!
8. Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers. Just like you, highway workers want to return home safely after each day’s work.
9. Some work zones - like line painting, road patching, and mowing - are mobile, moving down the road as the work is finished. Just because you don’t see the workers immediately after you see the warning signs doesn’t mean they’re not out there. Observe the posted signs until you see the one that says you’ve left the work zone.
10. Expect delays; plan for them and leave early to reach your destination on time. Highway agencies use many different ways to inform motorists about the location and duration of major work zones. Often, the agencies will suggest a detour to help you avoid the work zone entirely. Plan ahead, and try an alternate route.