**10 Road Construction Work Zone Safety Tips**

Warmer weather means that roadwork season is in full eﬀect which means more and more work zones are popping up on our interstates, highways, and streets. It’s also the time of year when more people are on the road traveling greater distances to the beach, mountains, and other vacation spots.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI), there were 247 construction worker deaths caused by transportation incidents. Of those, 75 were pedestrian vehicular incidents, with 38 being caused by pedestrians being struck by vehicles in work zones. Roadway collisions involving motorized vehicles accounted for another 142 worker deaths.

1. ***Have a Plan***

Every road construction project should have a transportation management plan. The plan should consist of a temporary traﬃc control plan to protect workers by safely conducting traﬃc around or through the work zone. You should also have a traﬃc control plan for inside the work zone that manages the ﬂow of heavy equipment, construction vehicles, and workers.

1. ***Properly Control Traffic***

The work zone should consist of an advanced warning area with warning signs alerting motorists of upcoming changes in driving conditions, a transition area using traﬃc control devices for lane closures and traﬃc pattern shifts, a buﬀer area, the work area, and a termination area to allow traﬃc to resume back to normal and a sign indicating that the work zone has ended.

All traﬃc control devices whether it’s cones, barrels, barriers, or signs should comply the Federal Highway Administration’s Manual on Uniform Traﬃc Control Devices (MUTCD) along with any state agency requirements.

1. ***Create Separate Work Areas***

Road construction work zones are busy areas usually with several work activities taking place at the same time. To avoid accidents, use cones, barrels, and barriers to clearly delineate speciﬁc areas of the work zone such as material storage, areas where heavy equipment is being used, vehicle parking, and safe areas for workers on foot to move about in.

1. ***Wear Proper Safety Equipment***

Proper safety equipment should be worn by all personnel inside the work zone. Personal protective equipment including hard hats, steel-toed boots, highly visible clothing, and, depending on the noise levels, hearing protection.

All PPE should meet or exceed the American National Standards Institute’s (ANSI) developed standards. All highly visible clothing whether it’s a vest, jacket, or shirt should be bright ﬂuorescent orange or lime/yellow and have visible reﬂective material, especially if working at night, and should meet ANSI Class 2 or 3 standards.

1. ***Be Aware of Your Surroundings***

Regardless of what your job duties entail in the work zone, you should always be mindful of what’s going on around you. Avoid walking behind any vehicles that may be backing up or into the swing radius of heavy equipment.

Whenever possible, face traﬃc while inside the work zone or have a spotter available when your back is turned. Spotters should also be used to monitor the movement of vehicles and heavy equipment inside the work zone in addition to monitoring traﬃc to alert workers to any potential dangers.

1. ***Avoid Blind Spots***

Vehicles and heavy equipment are constantly moving about inside the work zone including dump trucks, compactors, pavement planers, excavators, pavers, and rollers. Operators should ensure that all mirrors and visual aid devices are attached and operating properly including backup alarms and lights.

If you are on foot and working near these machines while in operation remember that the

driver has a limited line of sight. Always stay in visual contact with the driver. A good rule of

thumb to follow is that if you can’t see them then they probably don’t see you.

1. ***Have a Competent Person On-hand***

A competent person should be on the jobsite whenever work is being performed. Per OSHA, a competent person is someone “capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings, or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to

employees, and who has the authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate

them.” A competent person is needed to conduct hazard assessments and regular

inspections of the worksite.

A competent person is also needed to select the appropriate class of PPE to be used by

workers and to approve the appropriate types of traffic control devices. Workers should

report any unsafe hazards or equipment to the competent person assigned to the work zone

so they can be corrected immediately.

1. ***Start Each Workday with a Safety Meeting***

In addition to ensuring that all personnel at the jobsite have the proper training required it is also a good idea to have a quick safety meeting before work begins. Since conditions can change greatly from day to day in the work zone workers should be briefed on the work activity scheduled each day and notiﬁed of all potential hazards. This is also a good time to ensure that all workers have and are wearing the proper PPE required for the work being done that day.

1. ***Have a Site-Specific Safety Program***

Every road construction project is diﬀerent and each work zone has its own unique hazards and challenges so creating a safety program geared speciﬁcally for the site can go a long way in preventing accidents.

The site-speciﬁc safety program should include identifying all hazards and plans to control and mitigate them, schedules to routinely inspect all equipment and material, a plan for ﬁrst aid and emergency medical care in the event of an accident, and safety training schedules for all employees.

1. ***Stay Hydrated***

Workers performing road construction are susceptible to overexertion and heat-related illnesses. Asphalt absorbs 95% of the sun’s rays and asphalt temperatures can easily be 30° F or higher than the surrounding air temperature.

Workers should drink plenty of water or liquids high in electrolytes like sports drinks or coconut water. Workers should also get out of the heat and sun as much as possible especially on extremely hot days to avoid heatstroke, dehydration, and heat exhaustion.