



Toolbox Talks

Spotlight on Safety



Work Zone Safety

Highway, utility, and street construction workers are at risk of fatal and serious nonfatal injury when working in the vicinity of passing motorists, construction vehicles, and equipment. Motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists are also at risk. Each year, an average of 700 people are killed and another 24,000 are injured in work zone traffic accidents. Of the 700 who die in work zone traffic accidents each year, about 20 percent are construction workers. The statistics include workers who are killed or injured by work zone construction vehicles and equipment.

According to the American Traffic Safety Services Association, the key to working safely in work zones during the day or at night is simply a matter of knowing the ABCs of work zone safety. “A” stands for AWARENESS, “B” for BEING VISIBLE, and “C” for COMMUNICATION.

- ▲ **Awareness** is a matter of knowing where the traffic is and where you are in relation to that traffic. Do not turn your back to traffic and always have an escape route in mind just in case a vehicle crashes through the cones or barrels.
- ▲ **Being Visible** means wearing the proper type of fluorescent retroreflective clothing so you can be seen by drivers and equipment operators. Don't let your guard down because a driver may be distracted or not paying attention.
- ▲ **Communication** addresses the need for everyone to know and understand the jobsite hazards and what controls must be in place before work begins. Through the use of cones, barrels, barriers, delineators, lighted signs, arrow boards, and yellow lights, the driver should be easily guided through the work zone. Flaggers should communicate with traffic by using SLOW/STOP paddles and hand signals. Workers should also watch each other's back and communicate if dangerous situations emerge.

There are some commonsense rules to keep in mind when working around traffic.

- ▲ Stay back from heavy equipment and make sure the operator can see you. Never walk behind or to the blind side of an excavator, crane, or other heavy equipment because the operator may not know you are there.
- ▲ Operate equipment **only** if qualified and authorized to do so.
- ▲ Never hitch a ride on a truck or equipment.
- ▲ Know the appropriate hand signals, especially the hand signal for “stop,” when working around heavy equipment.

Work zone safety is important to you and the motorists. Know your ABCs and work safely.