

Respect the cone zone: Orange is your clue!

This year, the Oregon Department of Transportation is raising awareness about the importance of driving safely through road construction work zones.

Why?

Oregonians are starting to see orange. Road construction signs, cones and barrels are popping up along Oregon's streets and highways. As we move into a busy construction season, our message to Oregonians is to **SLOW DOWN**. "We know highway work zones can be frustrating at times. We realize your life is busy and your time is precious," said ODOT Director Matt Garrett. "But please understand when you drive dangerously through a work zone you're not just putting the lives of highway workers at risk – you're risking your own life, and the lives of your loved ones." The majority of people injured or killed in these crashes are drivers, passengers or pedestrians, not workers. We also know road construction is one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States. The risk of death is seven times higher for road workers than for an average worker. Nationally, on average, three work zone fatalities occur every day. In Oregon during the last 10 years, there's been an average of 466 work zone related crashes each year, including an average of 16 serious injury crashes and eight fatal crashes.

The single biggest factor in crashes is driver inattention; that's why orange cones, variable message signs and other tools are used to alert motorists. The other major contributing factor is speed which is why work zones often require lower speed limits. Even if you don't see anyone working in a work zone, it's still important to slow down because traffic lanes are often narrow, rough and have little or no shoulder in a work zone.