



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
BRUCE RAUNER

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National Work Zone Awareness Week Launches in Illinois

IDOT hosts kickoff event to construction season at Jane Byrne Interchange

CHICAGO (Apr. 10, 2018) — Governor Bruce Rauner joined state and federal transportation officials today to kick off National Work Zone Awareness Week in Illinois. He's urging drivers to slow down and give workers adequate space as construction season ramps up.

"Construction workers have one of the most dangerous jobs in the state. They put themselves in harm's way every day to make sure we all have decent roads to travel," Rauner said. "They deserve to feel safe in their workplace and we want to make sure they go home to their families every night."

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is partnering with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Illinois State Police, Illinois Tollway and other local and national partners to spread the word about work zone safety. The theme this year is "Work Zone Safety – Everybody's Responsibility."

There are about 5,200 work zone crashes in Illinois each year. In 2017, 29 people died in a work zone. IDOT Secretary Randy Blankenhorn says it's not just construction workers who are killed or injured in these areas.

"Almost four out of five work zone fatalities involve someone other than a worker. That's why it's critical that work zones be safe for all – workers, motorists, freight haulers, drivers, pedestrians and cyclists alike," Blankenhorn said. "As the transportation hub of North America, Illinois will have work zones of all sizes this construction season. Everyone has to be diligent when it comes to keeping safe."

In recent years, Illinois has strengthened laws to increase safety in work zones. Fines for speeding in work zones are \$375 for first-time offenders and \$1,000 for a second offense. The penalty for hitting a worker is a fine of up to \$10,000 and 14 years in prison.

“The Illinois State Police is committed to ensuring the safety of the motoring public, construction zone workers, and emergency personnel who are working in areas where highway construction is occurring,” said ISP Director Leo P. Schmitz. “Our Troopers will strictly enforce work zone posted speed limits and distracted driving violations. Please be extra cautious when traveling through Work Zones. Give Them a Break! Slow Down and Move Over!”

The kickoff event took place on the Jane Byrne Interchange, in Chicago. It’s the gateway to the city’s central business district and is considered one of the most complex pieces of infrastructure in the country. It’s where Interstates 90, 94 and 290 converge in a dense urban environment with more than 400,000 vehicles traveling through it each day.

“Last year, we lost a colleague who was killed while doing his job along one of our roads,” said Illinois Tollway Board Chairman Bob Schillerstrom. “We know firsthand that accidents can happen anywhere, but we want to emphasize that it’s vitally important for drivers to slow down, eliminate distractions, and focus on safety in work zones. At the end of the day, we want everyone--drivers, emergency responders and the workers building and maintaining the roads—to return home safely to their families.”

The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) showcased the National Work Zone Memorial during the kickoff event, paying tribute to those who have lost their lives in work zones across the country. It is a blunt reminder that work zone fatalities are more than just statistics.

“This event continues to grow every year and we are grateful to all those who participate in spreading awareness of work zone safety,” said ATSSA President and CEO Roger Wentz. “Thousands of people are impacted each year by work zone-related injuries and fatalities. We all need to advocate for infrastructure changes and safety measures that protect those who put their lives on the line to maintain and repair our nation’s roadways.”

To promote safety in the field, IDOT is working with its industry partners to host “tailgate talks” at construction sites throughout the week. The discussions provide workers with refreshers on work zone protocol to encourage safety throughout the construction season. This Friday, April 13th, Laborers will continue their tradition of staffing rest areas across the state and distributing materials that stress the importance of safe driving through work zones.

To learn more work zone rules and driving tips, an online quiz is available at idot.illinois.gov

Video of the event will be posted [here](#).

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