

TRUCK TALK

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Work Zone Safety

As this is being written, we are headed into the heaviest part of the highway construction season throughout CWG®-land! And, even though the spring, summer and fall seasons are the busiest times for highway construction, in many parts of the country the highway construction season runs a full 12 months. Even though activity is lessened during the late fall, winter and early spring seasons, construction continues and therefore can contribute to some challenging highway situations.

SPEED

Certainly speed can be a factor when navigating construction sites – and most are marked with a maximum permissible speed for that zone and location. It's always a good idea to slow down when approaching a work zone – even though you're not in the reduced speed area. This allows sufficient time to react to unexpected situations and to be at the posted speed when entering the work zone.

Marked construction zone speed limits are the law and are frequently enforced with a patrol car 'buried' within other construction vehicles. It's wise to note that many states have a 'Fines Double in Construction Zones' policy in addition to some hefty fines that are tailored to violations within construction zones. It's also wise to note that enforcement is up in many areas due to flagrant violation of the work zone speed limits.

FOLLOWING DISTANCE

Leave extra space for the unexpected. Many times highway workers can become distracted and wander outside of their protective area. Certainly a bit of extra following distance can allow sufficient time to react to a situation rather than being caught up in it.

NEVER pass within a construction zone – even if there seems to be room. The work zone is marked No Passing for a reason.

Pay particular attention to the traffic around you – and make sure that you are not tailgating the vehicle in front of you and that you are not being tailgated! NEVER attempt to get a tailgater to back off by driving at unreasonably slow speeds or jamming on your brakes – these types of actions can create anger on the part of both the person behind you in addition to the line of traffic behind.

ROAD RAGE IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM

In today's world, many drivers do not seem to be able to absorb the ups and downs of driving on our highways. Certainly any responsible driver does not want to be the perpetrator or the victim of a road rage incident. Keep your mind on what you are doing, enjoy a quiet moment of slower speeds and pay attention to your surroundings, and any anger seems to dissipate with each mile.

Do NOT use work zones as an opportunity for a 'mental coffee break' – your surroundings can change at a moments notice so be prepared for the unexpected!

Delays are a part of travel on our Nation's highways today; the road repairs are necessary and hopefully result in smoother 'sailing' down the road. Allow a few extra minutes in scheduling so that if a work zone is encountered it doesn't become the 'end of the world' and result in missed appointments and schedules.

Remember, watch your speed (slow down!), increase your following distance, and keep your cool no matter how stupid or irresponsible the other motorists might get. The workers in the construction zone, your fellow motorists, and you will benefit from these hallmarks of a professional driver. The Federal Highway Administration has additional information available on this subject at <http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/>, or <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/>.

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