



SHIFT BRIEFING



WORK ZONE INTRUSIONS

A worker or motorist is killed in a roadway construction zone every 8 hours. More than 50,000 Americans - enough to fill most major league baseball and football stadiums - are also injured in construction zone accidents each year. Each year nearly 6,000 crashes occur in New Jersey when road construction or workers are present. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, injuries in work zones are increasing.

ASK: Why do you think accidents in work zones are so frequent and becoming more frequent?

Possible Answers:

- Drivers are more distracted by technology, including cell phones, GPS, and complicated audio systems.
- Drivers are more rushed or at least feel more rushed.
- Americans are getting angrier.
- Traffic is getting heavier.
- COVID reduced behind-the-wheel time, reducing the physical and mental capabilities of drivers.
- The number of impaired drivers may be increasing with the legalization of cannabis.
- Many schools have discontinued Driver Ed classes, reducing the training of young drivers.

ASK: Can we change any of these reasons? The obvious answer is NO.

A majority of work-zone crashes are rear-ended or same-direction sideswipe collisions. This may indicate that the advanced warning strategies used by road crews may not be sufficient, especially since we know drivers are more distracted, angrier, and less experienced, and some are even impaired. Let's review the MINIMUM warning requirements for the three main types of work zones we use:

MOBILE WORK ZONES – continually moving but can include stops up to 15 minutes

- High-intensity amber warning lights, visible to traffic approaching from the front and rear
- Workers wearing ANSI Class 2 or 3 high-visibility outerwear

SHORT DURATION – stops from 15 minutes to 1 hour

- Amber warning lights and ANSI Class 2 or 3 high-visibility outerwear
- 1 to 3 warning signs must be put out – the number depends on the location
- Traffic cones directing traffic must be put out – the number depends on the location

SHORT-TERM STATIONARY – stops from 1 hour to 8 hours (1 day-time work shift)

- Amber warning lights and ANSI Class 2 or 3 high-visibility outerwear
- 3 or more warning signs depending on the location
- Traffic cones delineating lane tapers and buffers zones

ASK: When is this NOT enough, and what can this department do to add more advanced warnings to motorists approaching from the front and rear?

Possible answers:

Working close to intersections

Working just after curves, hills & dips in the road

Working peak traffic flow (rush hours & school time)

Working near high schools (inexperienced drivers)

Additional warning signs

Blocker vehicles with amber warning lights

Position flagger to warn approaching vehicles

Request police presence

Blocker vehicles and police presence can be requested for a specific location, and not the whole job.

KEY TAKE-AWAY: We cannot change drivers, we can only change how we set up work zones to improve our safety.

