



EL PASO DISTRICT

Jennifer Wright

(915) 790-4340

Jennifer.Wright3@txdot.gov

Lauren Macias-Cervantes

(915) 790-4341

lauren.maciascervantes@txdot.gov

NMDOT

Ami R. Evans, District -1 PIO

(575)640-5981

ami.evans@state.nm.us

TxDOT, NMDOT PARTNER FOR NATIONAL WORK ZONE AWARENESS WEEK

Departments unite to promote safety as departments continue, begin projects near state lines

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The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) are joining forces to recognize National Work Zone Awareness Week (NWZAW) April 11-15, 2022. The road departments collaborate on projects, emergency response, and severe weather preparedness but have never partnered to promote work zone safety awareness week.

NWZAW, now in its 22nd year, is a public awareness campaign that spreads the message throughout the U.S. that everyone shares the responsibility for work zone safety. This year's theme is "Work Zones are a sign to slow down."

The Departments urge the public to drive carefully in and around work zones.

"We are all responsible for work zone safety," Transportation Secretary Mike Sandoval said. "In 2021 we lost a 22-year veteran worker to a work zone incident. It is critical for motorists to responsibly navigate through work zones. Everyone should arrive home safely, including the men and women working to improve our roadways."

"The rise in roadway fatalities over the last two years is staggering; and if we are going to make progress, we must all take responsibility to improve safety in everything that we do when it comes to our roadways," said Texas Department of Transportation Executive Director Marc Williams. "Our collective efforts to shine a light on work zone safety are urgent. Last year, 244 people died in work zone traffic crashes in Texas, up 33% from 2020, to include many drivers and passengers. We want everyone to get home safely."

Residents and the public are reminded to drive and work safely to help save lives. With everyone working together, we can achieve zero deaths on our roads and in work zones.

"Motorists may not realize; they are at an equal amount of risk of injury or death as the construction workers due to speed and distractions," District Engineer Trent Doolittle said. "I for one, never want to lose one of our employees in a work zone related incident."

"Work zones present a different and sometimes challenging environment for drivers to navigate," said TxDOT El Paso District Engineer Tomas Treviño. "Drivers may encounter uneven pavement, narrow lanes, concrete barriers, slow-moving heavy equipment and vehicles that make sudden stops."

In the El Paso District in 2021, there were 907 traffic crashes in work zones, resulting in 3 fatalities and 13 serious injuries. In El Paso, there were 777 traffic crashes in work zones, resulting in 1 fatality and 9 serious injuries.

The DOT's will launch their joint safety effort with a press conference April 11, 2022, at 2p.m. at the TxDOT Texas Travel Information Center located at 8799 S. Desert Blvd. Anthony, TX, 79821.

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To help drive home safety reminders, the TxDOT El Paso District will place and unveil, a third life-sized creature created by maintenance staff from previously hit orange barrels. A new rattlesnake will join Safe-T-Rex and Work Zone Willy in reminding drivers of road safety. Everyone is asked to show their support of work zone safety Wednesday, April 13, for “Go Orange Day”. That’s when the public is being asked to wear orange just like roadway safety professionals across the U.S. do daily.

As part of its ongoing work zone awareness efforts, TxDOT also reminds drivers of the Move Over/Slow Down law, which requires drivers to move over a lane or reduce their speed to 20 mph below the posted limit when they see flashing blue or amber lights on a TxDOT vehicle, emergency vehicle or tow truck stopped on the roadside. Not doing so can result in a fine of up to \$2,000.

Tips for driving safely in a work zone:

- Slow down. Speeding is one of the major causes of work zone crashes.
- Don’t tailgate. Keep a safe distance between you, the car ahead of you, the construction workers, and their equipment.
- Pay attention to signage
- Stay alert and minimize distractions. No phones, loud music, makeup, or food.
- Be patient and stay calm.
- Check the New Mexico Department of Transportation web site for information on work zone delays throughout the state at: <http://www.nmroads.com> or call 511 or 1-800-432-4269
- For Texas Department of Transportation work zones and closures visit <http://drivetexas.org> or www.txdot.gov

More about the week:

National Work Zone Awareness Week is an initiative that began in 1999 and is conducted each spring by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), to bring awareness to work zone safety issues. The campaign focuses on offering safety tips for drivers to help them to be safe and drive smart in work zones. For online information about National Work Zone Awareness Week, go to: <https://www.nwzaw.org>.

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