

Work Zone Safety, Part 1: Preparation

When you work construction on or near roadways, pedestrians and motorists are a factor that you must consider. Work zone safety protects the public and workers from accidents and minimizes the negative impact of the project on the community.

Traffic Control Standards and Plans

The most common traffic control standard in the United States is the **Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)**, part 6. States follow MUTCD and may have additional requirements that you and your employer must confirm before beginning work.

Workers in work zones must:

- Follow the traffic control plan
- Provide clear, consistent signs, markings and other visual cues
- Perform routine day and night inspections
- Be aware that conditions can change unexpectedly

Traffic control plans should include ALL types of traffic, be in writing and be approved by local authorities. The agency that has jurisdiction over the work zone must approve modifications to the plan. Your employer will provide traffic control plan safety instructions where you work.

Five Areas of Work Zones

The five areas of work zones are the:

- **Advance warning area.** It warns the public with increasingly specific signs as they approach with work area. The spacing and placement of signs will vary depending on speed and visibility.
- **Transition area.** It is where traffic moves from its normal path via detours, lane changes and tapers.
- **Buffer area.** It gives motorists who cross over traffic control devices time to react and stop before striking anyone. Keep free of materials, equipment and people.
- **Work area.** It contains workers, tools, equipment, material, vehicles and debris. Ensure that there are safe ways to enter and exit the work area that dissuade or prevent unauthorized entry.
- **Termination area.** It is where traffic passes beyond the work area and resumes normal movement. Tapers should be about 100-feet long and use 5 to 6 traffic control devices per lane. Many termination areas include termination signage.

Work Zone Inspections

Perform routine daily and nightly inspections, even when work is stopped. Look for skid marks, damaged barricades, dirty/displaced traffic control devices and material, equipment and debris infringing on traffic lanes. Failure to inspect and correct issues can lead to liability and accidents.

Include other workers in inspections. Fix problems as soon as you find them, if you can. Block hazards to prevent accidents. Document inspections and corrective actions.