

## Construction Services Group

# Protecting our Construction Work Zones

The summer season is upon us and roadwork is in full effect, which means more construction work zones on our major highways, secondary and tertiary roads. In addition, with school ending there are more people on the roads, creating a perfect storm for making our work zones more dangerous. Daily changes in traffic patterns, narrow right-of-ways, partial street closures and distracted driving are all contributing factors in work zone crashes, injuries and fatalities.

## DRIVING DANGERS

Distracted drivers kill approximately 3,300 people and injure another 421,000 annually. (NHTSA, 2018).

Distracted driving has quickly become a loss leader for the insurance industry throughout the country. With more and more road construction zones popping up, this pattern of losses can only get worse.

According to the California Office of Traffic Safety (COTS), in 2016 nearly 40% of drivers admitted to making a mistake while talking on a cell phone. Additionally, engaging in visual-manual subtasks, such as reaching for a phone, dialing and texting, increases the risk of getting into a crash by three times (COTS, 2018).

To put this in perspective, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that a distracted driver's reaction time is similar to that of someone who is legally drunk. Brain activity is decreased, braking time is down anywhere from 10-25% and most distracted drivers take their eyes off the road for the length of an entire football field while texting and driving (NHTSA, 2018).

As employers we work diligently to ensure that our employees go home safe and our jobsites are protected. To help assist with your efforts, here are some tips for improving work zone safety:



- **Develop a plan** - Every work zone is different and we should work to develop a traffic control plan. This plan should include both traffic outside the work zone and inside the work zone. Whenever possible, you should coordinate with local law enforcement to increase patrols ahead of your work zones. Their presence is a natural deterrent to distracted driving and speeding.
- **Increase signage for traffic control** - Establish guidelines for appropriate advanced warning and alerting motorists. Perhaps expand those zones and increase signage to allow greater time and awareness for drivers. Buffer areas are a growing trend to shield workers and extend protections beyond the reasonable traffic plans.

- **Increase awareness of surroundings** - We must constantly communicate with our employees and workers to be more mindful of what is happening. With multiple tasks on a single jobsite, it would be useful to have spotters to successfully coordinate the operations within the site. These spotters can effectively monitor the movement of equipment and vehicles within the work zone.
- **Conduct daily Safety meetings** - A quick safety meeting each day before work begins can highlight the potential issues for the day. Work zones change drastically from day to day, and a briefing of potential hazards will keep everyone on the same page.
- **Keep workers hydrated** - Outdoor workers are more susceptible to overexertion and heat related illnesses. A work zone can easily be 20-30 degrees warmer than surrounding areas. Workers should be given plenty of water and other high electrolyte drinks throughout the day. Quick breaks out of the sun, especially during hot summer days will do wonders to avoid heatstroke, dehydration, brain fog and injuries.

We all drive through work zones every day. The amount of construction underway is tremendous, and every one of those sites has the unfortunate potential of becoming the scene of a traffic accident. We all must do our part to try to limit these crashes. Work zone safety is everyone's responsibility.

The goal is to improve safety, reduce crashes and injuries and bring the number of fatalities to zero in your work zones. As a driver, slow down, pay attention and get off the phone. As a contractor, take the steps needed to create the safest worksites possible. Highway contractors and their workers in the field must always implement best practices when actively working in construction zones.

The tips and best practices discussed here will help to control as many factors as possible to mitigate the risks in your work zones. Expect the Unexpected. If everyone does their part, hopefully we can all have a safe and productive summer season.

California Office of Traffic Safety. Retrieved June 7, 2018 from: [https://www.ots.ca.gov/Media\\_and\\_Research/Campaigns/Distracted\\_Driving/default.asp](https://www.ots.ca.gov/Media_and_Research/Campaigns/Distracted_Driving/default.asp)  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Retrieved June 7, 2018 from: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>

---

## About Alliant Insurance Services

Alliant Insurance Services is one of the nation's leading and fastest growing distributors of diversified insurance products and services. In the face of increasing complexity, our approach is simple: bring on the best people and invest more deeply in the industries and clients we serve. We operate through a network of specialized national platforms and regional offices to offer a comprehensive portfolio of services to our clients. Our goal is to ensure that they get the most innovative products—and the most innovative thinking—in the industry.

