



CAUTION IN WORK ZONES

By Patrick Sullivan

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The road construction season is in full swing in the State of Michigan. Let's hope it's a safe one for motorists and road workers. From 2001 – 2013, twenty-six people have been killed in work zones on or next to the roadway. Many times the victim is a motorist driving through the work zone. A young man this past January drove his pickup truck **around** the traffic control devices on the ramp to enter I-696 and his truck fell to the freeway below; he suffered fatal injuries. I find that when I am driving through a work zone it usually only takes a few extra seconds to get through the zone when I **slow down** to the proper speed that is posted there. If traffic is moving slowly through the zone, then we all need to exercise a little bit of patience to reach our destinations. We all want the roads fixed, and must deal with the short-term inconvenience of getting the work done.

When entering a work zone, motorists must put down the phone and stop other distractions, such as changing music, eating, disciplining children, etc. We need to observe and comply with the traffic control devices that are set up.

WARNING TO ROAD WORKERS:

Motorists are **not** always paying attention like we should be when driving through your work place. It may be someone eighty years old who possibly should not be driving at all; it may be a sixteen-year-old driving through their very first work zone; or maybe it's someone leaving the bar after having too many drinks and should not be behind the wheel at all.

WARNING TO MOTORISTS:

The contractor does **not** always set up the traffic control devices as prescribed in the MMUTCD - Michigan Manual of Traffic Control Devices. For contractors working on or next to the road, the MMUTCD should be their bible when drafting a TCP - Traffic Control Plan.

Whether it's a short-term or long-term job, on the freeway or a two-lane road, in the city or on rural roads, the contractor **must** have a TCP. There are four key elements to a TCP:

- **Advanced warning signs**
- **Transition or taper area to the activity**
- **Activity - the actual work being done**
- **Termination and taper back to normal traffic**

The contractor also needs to make sure that the devices are clearly legible, not faded, scratched, dirty, obstructed or obsolete. They need to ensure that their workers are wearing the proper high visibility clothing: Class 2 for daytime work and Class 3 for night-time work. They need to make sure that their employees have received training on the hazards of working on the road. The TCP takes planning and may have to be adjusted as work progresses.

TO THE MOTORING PUBLIC: Please slow down, obey the traffic control, eliminate the distractions, expect the unexpected, and **pay attention** so that no one – either motorists or road workers – has to pay the ultimate price and lose their lives.

If the road workers drove their vehicle through your office or place of work you would be upset, and there would be casualties for you and your co-workers.

These are **real people** working on our roads - not some inanimate orange barrel standing there. They have families just like you and I do. They go to the same church that you do, they sit behind you at the restaurant, and their kids play with your kids. They deserve to go home at the end of the work day to their families, just as we all do. So, when we are in their place of work, let's all slow down, give em' a brake, respect the vest, and let them do their jobs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Patrick Sullivan began his career with the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) as a Compliance Officer with the Construction Safety Division in 1994. Seeking a new challenge he transferred to the CET Division as a traditional consultant specializing in construction safety. He enjoys reaching out to employers and employees to help them be proactive instead of reactive to jobsite safety. Michigan employers, employees, trade organizations and associations may request assistance with training; safety and health hazard recognition, prevention and control; and, MIOSHA Standards interpretation. In addition to these services, Michigan employers may request compliance abatement assistance, consultation services, and surveys to be conducted at their facilities. For more information, contact MIOSHA at (517) 322-1809. ☒