

FORTY-FIVE PERCENT OF HIGHWAY CONTRACTORS HAD VEHICLES CRASH INTO THEIR CONSTRUCTION WORK ZONES DURING PAST YEAR, NEW STUDY FINDS



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Vehicle Drivers and Passengers More Likely to Be Killed or Injured During a Work Zone Crash Than Construction Workers, Officials Urge Motorists to Slow Down, Stay Alert in Highway Work Zones

Forty-five percent of highway contractors had motor vehicles crash into their construction work zones during the past year, according to the results of a new highway work zone study conducted by the Associated General Contractors of America. Association officials added that the study found work zone crashes are more likely to kill vehicle operators and passengers than construction workers.

“There is little margin for error when you work within a few inches of thousands of fast-moving vehicles,” said Tom Case, the chair of the association’s national highway and transportation division and senior vice president of Watsonville, Calif.-based Granite Construction. “As the data makes clear, not enough drivers are slowing down and staying alert near work sites.”

Case said that 43 percent of contractors reported that motor vehicle operators or passengers were injured during work zone crashes this past year, and 16 percent were killed in those crashes. While they are less likely to kill construction workers, highway work zone crashes do pose a significant risk for people in hard hats, Case added. He noted that more than 20 percent of work zone crashes injure construction workers, and 6 percent of those crashes kill them.

Work zone crashes also have a pronounced impact on construction schedules and costs, Case said. He noted that 25 percent of contractors reported that work zone crashes during the past year have forced them to temporarily shut down construction activity. Those delays were often lengthy, as 38 percent of those project shutdowns lasted two or more days.

Association officials said that 67 percent of contractors nationwide feel that tougher laws, fines and legal penalties for moving violations in work zones would reduce injuries and fatalities. In addition, 74 percent of contractors said that an increased use of concrete barriers will help reduce injuries and fatalities. And 66 percent of contractors nationwide agree that more frequent safety training for workers could help. They added that many firms and the association have crafted these types of highway safety programs.

But Case suggested that the best way to improve safety was for motorists to be more careful while driving through highway work zones. “Ensuring proper work zone safety starts and ends with cautious drivers,” Case said.

The work zone safety study was based on a nationwide survey of highway construction firms conducted by the association in March this year. More than 400 contractors completed the survey nationwide, while a large enough sample of contractors in six states completed the survey to allow for state-specific results.

View the national highway construction zone survey results. View results for Texas, New York, California, Alabama, Iowa and North Carolina.