

Disregarding Work Zone Laws Costs Human Lives

IRTBA Press Release

April 9, 2019



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, April 9, 2019

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National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week is April 8-12



One-hundred and fifty memorial cones on display at this morning's Work Zone Safety press conference, representing the national average of annual construction worker deaths.

CHICAGO--The Illinois Road and Transportation Builders Association (IRTBA) was among the organizations present at a press conference today to raise awareness and advocate for safer work zones at the start of this construction season.

IRTBA and agency partners called on motorists to obey work zone laws for speeding, to move over and slow down for vehicles with emergency lights on, and to follow the law banning the use of mobile devices while driving in work zones.

"Innocent lives are lost due to people disobeying the laws. Stop and think about what it would be like to be the person on the other side of the barrels or barrier wall. Or if it was your loved one in the work zone, or in the I-HELP truck, or police cruiser," said IRTBA Chairman Mark Barkowski. Mark Barkowski is

also senior executive vice president of F.H. Paschen, a commercial construction and contracting company based in Chicago.

"Our members continue to use preventative measures to make the work zone as safe as possible for workers and the motoring public. Some contractors log their near misses and collaborate with state agencies like the Tollway and IDOT to track the data from those close calls to help make informed decisions about safety and indicate hot spots on projects," said IRTBA President & CEO Mike Sturino. "This logging and information sharing is done so the industry can *ACT* out on the jobsite -- act with trooper presence or logistics changes *before* there is an accident. But there is one element to the equation contractors can't always control, and that's where the motoring public comes in," Sturino said.

"The high rates of speed and close proximity to workers by drivers are the biggest danger in the work zone, and that's closely followed by distracted drivers. Respecting the lowered speed limits, moving over, and restricting any phone use -- including hands-free -- is particularly important in work zones. Large equipment is entering in and out of the job site at a slower rate of speed, the width of normal traffic lanes tends to be smaller, and detours, lane changes, and uneven pavement surfaces are common and require focus," said Barkowski.



National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week is taking place April 8 through April 12, 2019, and occurs every year to raise awareness about hazards and the need for the use of extra caution in work zone areas. The month of April is also National Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

IRTBA is dedicated to eliminating risky and distracted driving behaviors on Illinois roads by **hosting a Distracted Driving webinar April 30** , to help our members educate their employees, family, and friends about the dangers of distracted driving. To increase awareness and public education on this critically important topic, the association will also make a recorded version available to the public on our website after the event, which can be accessed at www.irtba.org/RBU .

IRTBA, along with IDOT, Illinois Tollway, and other industry partners are banning together and holding events throughout the state and hosting social media campaigns this week to demonstrate to motorists the critical need to follow these laws, which will lead to a safer Illinois.

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About Illinois Road and Transportation Builders Association

The Illinois Road and Transportation Builders Association (IRTBA) has spent 81 years as the leading transportation industry trade association in Illinois. IRTBA member firms design, build, and maintain the state highways, transit systems, railways, and aviation systems. The core purpose of IRTBA's existence is to advance and promote the transportation design and construction industry in Illinois.