

For Immediate Release
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Phil Hewitt, Highway Commissioner

Vernon County Officials Remind Drivers to Stay Safe This Construction Season

Vernon County Highway Commissioner Phil Hewitt urges people to drive carefully in highway work zones throughout the 2019 construction season.

There were more than 2,700 work zone crashes throughout the state in 2017, according to preliminary state figures. Work zone crashes in Wisconsin last year caused 1,067 injuries and six deaths.

In Wisconsin, work zones include major highway construction and rehabilitation, maintenance, emergency response, utility work, municipal projects and more – any time in which there are flashing lights, signs, barrels or workers on the road.

National Work Zone Awareness Week takes place from April 8th through April 12th. The theme is “Drive Like You Work Here.”

Wednesday, April 10, is “Go Orange Day,” in which people are asked to wear something orange in support of highway safety. Social media pictures and posts are welcome using the #OrangeForSafety hashtag.

Work Zone Awareness Week is sponsored by federal, state and local transportation officials to draw attention to the safety needs of road workers during construction season. Generally, crashes occur when drivers speed through a work zone, do not pay attention to changing road conditions, run into other vehicles or highway equipment or drive off the road completely.

While typical construction work zones are prevalent throughout the county and state, there are also significant numbers of maintenance operations that may be short-term or moving operations. Drivers are reminded of the state’s, “Move Over, Slow Down” law, which requires drivers to shift lanes or slow down in order to provide a safety buffer for a squad car, ambulance, fire truck, tow truck, utility vehicle, or highway maintenance vehicle that is stopped on the side of a road with its warning lights flashing.

Additionally, drivers are reminded that a new law took effect in October 2016 making it illegal to talk on a hand-held mobile device while driving through a work zone. Violators face fines of up to \$40 on first offense and \$100 for subsequent offenses, plus costs.

Before hitting the road, drivers are encouraged to check 511 Wisconsin (511wi.gov and @511WI on Twitter), or use the 511 Wisconsin smart phone app for updates on road conditions and traffic flow.

Learn more: <http://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/safety/education/workzone/default.aspx>