



Colin Corneau Photo

Roads are busy, under construction – slow down and drive with caution

Don Hurst

Fall, for the heavy construction industry, is crunch time for completing projects before the road construction season ends. However, fall also means many people are back at work from vacation and children, back at school. So, as commuting and traffic increases, many on their way to daily destinations will be seeing the bright orange construction signs regularly.

A number of serious incidents, caused by motorists' lack of attention in construction zones, have injured construction workers and damaged equipment. This is alarming to the industry and associated organizations aiming to keep the public and workers safe.

Trevor Shwaluk, Safety Advisor for MHCA's WORKSAFELEY™ program, is one of the lead instructors for WORKSAFELEY™'s flagperson certification. Over the last several years, Shwaluk has heard numerous reports from our companies

of careless driving in road construction zones: people moving barricades and proceeding through work zones; cell-phone use while driving through construction zones; and, road rage. Worse, there have been reports of motorists driving intentionally towards flaggers at high speed and turning away at the last second, narrowly missing the worker.

"Safe driving is a responsibility of everyone on the road. There is a reason speed fines double in construction zones – to help ensure a safe work environment for Manitoba's construction workers," Shwaluk says. "By doing your part, slowing down and respecting direction in construction zones, the driving public can help ensure that our road workers have a safe workplace, and everyone can get home safely."

If a construction zone is unavoidable, drivers should allow extra time in their schedules, in case there are traffic delays. Every safe driver has a responsibility to exercise caution and good judgment in construction zones. Consideration for the safety of construction workers and other

motorists can help turn highway construction areas into "safe zones" for everyone.

"It's important when we're driving to remember that in a construction zone, our roads and highways are also workplaces, and everyone has the right to a safe workplace. We need to ensure that every person at work is treated with the same level of respect and consideration," Shwaluk says.

Many motorists view road construction workers as an inconvenience, but they should rather look at them as a service. Road and maintenance workers do their best to minimize motorist inconvenience and keep everyone safe, while repairing and building our roads and highways. It is up to motorists to be alert, aware and responsive.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association's message is simple: Road construction zones are people's workplaces and should be treated with respect and consideration for the workers.

Whether you are driving or walking to school or work, keep these tips in mind, when travelling near construction zones:



Don Hurst is the Director of MHCA WORKSAFELEY™ Education and Training



Drivers:

- Slow down – take it slow to raise your awareness and limit your risk of collision.
- Follow directions on signs – carefully read road signs to better understand your route.
- Be patient – with road and sidewalk changes, pedestrians may need more time to cross the road.

Pedestrians:

- Use designated crossings – play it safe and find the nearest designated crossing.
- Be alert – put your phone away and watch where you are going.
- Do not cut through construction zones – stick to designated routes and leave the construction zones to the workers.



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