



Safety Talk

Construction Work Zones

Drivers who have no problems in routine driving may encounter them where road construction or repair is under way.

First, look out for construction warnings on highways. Some are not as easy to notice as they should be, and perhaps you may not want to see them, may not want to be delayed.

However, drivers who suddenly round a bend at high speed and come on barricades and a survey party, a road maintenance vehicle, or perhaps a piece of heavy equipment in their lane or entering it, will slow down the hard way. In one case, sudden braking for a barricade caused a semi-trailer truck to overturn. Heed the orange signs.

The worst thing a driver can do when slowing down or stopped by unaccustomed road conditions is to lose your temper at the annoyance and take chances in order to make up time, or merely to get an unpleasant situation behind him. The mature driver takes these things in stride, doing what must be done safely to protect themselves and others.

The driver who stays alert for advance warning signs and prepares to follow them does protect others. Drivers who do not see or who ignore warning signs and who crash into work areas are a leading cause of death for on the job highway construction workers. Drivers should not resent the necessary slowdown caused by road work but should seek to cooperate. Above all, slow down for the small work party which may not have protected itself with adequate signs and barricades.

Furthermore, drivers who speed past construction sites where men work close to the road and where signs call for slow speeds sometimes hit employees or vehicles who have strayed from the site onto the road. It does not matter that "the other guy" should not have been there; there is blame on both sides.

Rocks and debris that may get on the road from the work site can be picked up by speeding vehicles and thrown at the employees on the site. The road is left open as a convenience to motorists, and they should reciprocate by driving safely past the site.

Flag people who direct traffic around a road construction project are highly visible in their bright orange vests, as they hold up their "Stop" and "Go" signs and inform drivers what they must do to get through a single lane bypass. Only the foolish driver will ignore their directions. In many states, disobeying a flag person and speeding in construction work zones is serious business punishable by fines and imprisonment if it results in a bodily injury accident. In most cases, the slowdown is not serious; no one is delayed long.

When knowledgeable driver enters a bypass lane, they know the pavement may not be as smooth as that of the expressway. In fact, it is likely to be rough and uneven, possibly full of potholes. Very often it is muddy and slippery. The good driver enters the bypass slowly and



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carefully. It is a known fact that lurching and swaying through at higher than posted speed limits could cause the loss of control.

Many construction projects are so located that a bypass alongside the work site is not possible. This is true in particular when a bridge is being replaced. In such cases a long detour is required, usually back at a crossroads that connects to an alternate route.

Such detours may involve more hazardous driving than a short bypass. They often make use of secondary roadways, or even unimproved country lanes. Use extreme caution to negotiate unexpected sharp turns in the detour without mishap.

One type of detour that may catch the flat country driver unaware is that which involves poorly maintained mountain roads. Any driver who is likely to encounter such driving should consider a few pointers:

- Long pulls on uphill grades and steep inclines where excessive speeds can trap the unwary driver are to be expected in mountain driving.
- If the engine overheats in a long pull in high altitude, find a wide shoulder and stop. Raise the hood and let the engine cool.
- Slow down before entering a downgrade, or you may be fooled by the increase in speed.
- Steady, gentle pressure on the brake pedal is better than intermittent heavy braking, which does not allow enough time between jabs to cool overheated brakes.
- Shift to a lower gear on a steep downgrade and let the engine help with the braking.
- Do not downshift suddenly if the pavement is slippery. Sudden engine braking might cause a skid.
- If your vehicle continues to gain speed after downshifting, slow with the brakes and shift to an even lower gear.
- Never coast downhill in neutral or with a depressed clutch.
- Never turn off the ignition when going downhill.
- Maintain a greater space cushion (following distance) behind other vehicles than usual when going downhill, since it takes longer to slow down or stop.



While driving on any kind of extended detour, be sure to watch for all detour turn signs, or you may get far off your course on uncharted roads. Remember that detour signs are considered temporary, and they may not be displayed as prominently as permanent road signs.

Although detour routes may include some stretches of good pavement, slower speeds are normally called for. Resist the tendency to pass another vehicle.

SOURCE: toolboxtopics.com



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