

Drivers ignore road rules, threatening the safety of construction workers

A new survey released recently by the Ontario Road Builders' Association (ORBA) found one in every three drivers (28 per cent) admits that they are not always focused on the road while driving. This can lead to speeding, weaving or failing to notice road signage, putting both drivers and road workers at risk.

The message from ORBA is simple: Construction zones are workplaces and should be treated with respect and consideration for their workers. The survey, conducted by Ipsos, shows that many drivers report witnessing a number of other drivers' bad habits including speeding (87 per cent), weaving (72 per cent) and road rage (61 per cent). This behaviour, when conducted in a work zone, endangers the safety of road workers. The survey also found that most Ontario drivers agree construction sites are simply people doing their jobs (93 per cent), but a significant majority also report viewing construction sites as an inconvenience (75 per cent). To educate drivers about the safety risks associated with ignoring road rules in construction zones, ORBA has launched an educational campaign. Site Unseen is a video series that imagines what would happen if the types of behaviours drivers display in construction zones were instead conducted by road workers in other professional settings, such as a traditional office. ORBA hopes the campaign will help drivers see how recklessness and poor etiquette in construction zones endangers workers and encourage drivers to change their behaviour.

“This campaign is about ensuring drivers perceive construction zones as workplaces – much like an office – and drive accordingly, so construction workers can be safe at work,” said ORBA Executive Director Geoff Wilkinson. “Our videos use humour to highlight the misperceptions some drivers have of construction zones and how those misperceptions can put road workers' safety at risk.” The Site Unseen videos will run throughout the summer. The campaign is supported by ORBA, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Labour and Ontario Provincial Police.

Road Safety Tips from ORBA to Ensure Construction Zone Safety

• Adhere to posted speed limits and other signage on the road. Speed limits change in construction zones for a reason. Make sure you follow posted signage and exercise caution in construction zones.

• Avoid distractions while driving. Only use your cell phone when parked, pre-set climate control and plan your route with a GPS before departing. Eliminating distractions will help you stay focused on the road.

• Plan ahead to avoid delays. Give yourself extra time for your commute. Know where construction zones and other delays are beforehand so they're not unexpected and cause a delay.

• Treat construction zones as if they were your own workplace. Construction zones are road builders' workplace. Show respect for the workers by treating it as if it were your own workplace.

“As Ontario continues to invest in critical transportation infrastructure, and as the number of cars on the road continues to increase, we must all focus on the safety of our road workers as they do their very important jobs,” Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca said. “This campaign highlights the importance of construction zone safety for Ontario road builders and motorists. Drivers must remember to adhere to posted signage and to respect Ontario's road workers.”

“It's important when we're driving to remember that our roads and highways are also sometimes 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,” Labour Minister Kevin Flynn observed. “Ontario has some of the safest workplaces in the world, and this campaign will help foster safe work environments for the men and women who build, maintain, and repair Ontario's roads.”

“Safe driving is a fundamental responsibility of everyone on the road,” OPP Deputy Commissioner Bill Blair commented. “There is a reason speed fines double in construction zones – to help foster a safe work environment for Ontario's construction workers. Do your part, slow down and respect construction zones so that our road workers can have a safe work environment and everyone can get home safely.”