

2021-2022 Oklahoma Work Zone Safe Program Report

Oklahoma Work Zone Safe
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“This crisis on our roads is urgent and preventable. We will redouble our safety efforts, and we need everyone – state and local governments, safety advocates, automakers, and drivers – to join us. All of our lives depend on it.” **Dr. Steven Cliff, NHTSA’s Deputy Administrator May 17, 2022**

June 1, 2022

Tim Gatz
Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation
Executive Director ODOT & OTA

Brian Taylor
Chief Engineer
Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Secretary Tim Gatz & Chief Engineer Brian Taylor

Safety for workers, contractors, first responders, and the public is the number one priority for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, and the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety.

Your leadership team’s vision to modernize work zone safety education and engagement with the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office through adopting the Oklahoma Work Zone Safe Program has positively impacted this shared priority.

The results: **Over twelve thousand Oklahoma teens representing more than 250 high schools have been educated on Work Zone Safety.** These teen drivers have joined our highway workers, contractors, first responders, agencies, and associations as partners in work zone safety.

Oklahoma is leading the nation with this new and continuing effort to modernize the engagement and education of thousands of lifelong Oklahoma drivers on the importance of being work zone safe.

The best is still to come as we expand our engagement with Oklahoma Driving Schools, increase our outreach, work zone safe educational scholarships, and share best practices with Department of Transportation and Association partners across the country.

May not one more name ever be engraved on the Fallen Workers Memorial.

Tom Robins


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Founder Work Zone Safe
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ODOT & OHSO Coordination

Work Zone Safety is the shared commitment of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office.

In coordination with Chief Engineer Brian Taylor and Director of Oklahoma Highway Safety Paul Harris Oklahoma, Work Zone Safe developed a 2022 Work Zone Safe statewide education and engagement plan representing a team approach to Oklahoma Work Zone Safety.

A pdf copy of the 2021-2022 plan has been included for your review.

The Risk to Safety

During the first nine months of 2021, the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported the highest increase in road fatalities in their Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) history.

NHTSA Region Six, of which Oklahoma is a part, saw a 17% increase in fatalities. Increases in speeding, distraction, crashes, impaired driving, and fatalities in Oklahoma were also reported while seatbelt use declined.

“This is a national crisis. When it comes to roadway deaths, we have a crisis that’s urgent, unacceptable - and preventable.” **U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg**

During this time, The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) also identified Oklahoma as a bottom ten state for Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMV) crashes within Work Zones.

In 2020, it was reported that nationally over 857 fatalities occurred in work zones.

53% of highway worker fatalities involved workers on foot being struck by a vehicle, with many work zone crashes including speeding and a rear-end collision.

Not seeing workers, contractors, and first responders with an increase in speeding, pedestrian fatalities, and incidents involving rear end collisions indicates that Oklahoma work zones are becoming distracted driving danger zones.

Oklahoma drivers are not connecting their disregard for safety within work zones with the real negative consequences for people they share them with.

Left unchecked and without a change in approach, Oklahoma Work Zones would become increasingly harmful and deadly for workers, contractors, first responders, and the traveling public.

Oklahoma's Response

Oklahoma chose to modernize its approach to educating and engaging Oklahoma's teen drivers who are developing work zone driving habits for life.

The goal was to give teen drivers the hands-on and online tools to become partners in work zone safety. These new teen drivers would then be recognized and rewarded for their commitment to being work zone safe.

This team effort of highway workers, contractors, first responders, educators, community leaders, agencies, and associations would meet and coordinate at quarterly Work Zone Safe meetings facilitated by Work Zone Safe.

The meeting is made up of all those who share in the mission for Oklahoma to lead the nation in modernizing work zone safety.



Inaugural Oklahoma Work Zone Safe Quarterly Meeting Hosted by: AOGC

Hands-on Education

The Oklahoma Work Zone Safe effort recognizes that new teen drivers do not have the necessary hands-on experience to navigate work zones safely.

New teen drivers do not understand the multiple conditions they encounter in a modern work zone. They do not appreciate the various workers, motorists, and first responders they share a work zone with. They do not understand all the laws, signs, and signals specific to work zones.

When it comes to Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMV) within work zones, they don't understand blind spots, stopping distance, the need for reduced speeds, seat belts, or other behaviors that will keep themselves and everyone safe within a work zone.

As a part of Oklahoma Work Zone Safe, new teen drivers are given a hands-on opportunity to learn these vital work zone safety lessons. They are joined by work zone safe workers, contractors, associations, and first responders. These volunteers allow them to learn about situations within a work zone and, most importantly, share personal stories of how unsafe behavior within a work zone impacts them personally.

This was the first time they ever spoke directly with a work zone professional for many teen drivers.

Teens can connect their positive or negative driving decisions to themselves and the lives of others—workers who have the right to come home safe to their families every day.

Oklahoma transportation workers appreciated the opportunity to share their dedication to their work while also giving a very personal appeal for having the teen driver join them in making safety their top priority as they share a work zone.

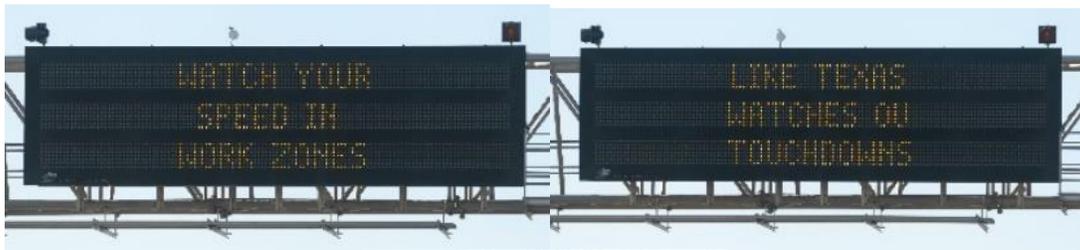


2021 Fall Oklahoma Teen Driver Events

During the Fall of 2021, work zone safe worked with Oklahoma Challenge to host more than a dozen events with over **5,500** Oklahoma teens representing more than **264** schools from across the state.

Focus on Bedlam Work Zone Safety

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation spends significant resources to ensure that the major transportation routes to the OU/Texas Bedlam football game under construction are open. Work Zone Safe supported the on-campus event at the University of Oklahoma to engage college drivers on the importance of safety while driving to the game.



Oklahoma Highway Patrol- Partners in Work Zone Safety

On August 16, 2021, Trooper Eric Foster was parked at a construction zone on I-40 near I-44 with his lights on. The crash sent the trooper's vehicle into a guard wall and the other driver's vehicle into the middle of the roadway.

"Immediately over that hill, there was a road crew on the road working behind lights," Foster said. "(That) could have possibly killed seven, ten people very easily. There was nothing there between them and me."

At the request of Oklahoma Work Zone Safe and with the support of the Commissioner of Public Safety, Trooper Foster was able to preserve his wrecked patrol car. The vehicle was then transported by trailer to events serving as a powerful visual and teaching tool for new teen drivers on Work Zone Safety.



Trooper Eric Foster and Work Zone Safe Founder Tom Robins Educate Teens on Work Zone Safety

2021 Oklahoma Work Zone Safe Fall Events

- September 7 – McAlester, Life Church, 1300 S George Nigh Expy, McAlester, OK
- September 9 – Broken Arrow, Stoney Creek Hotel, 200 W Albany St, Broken Arrow, OK
- September 14 – Duncan, Simmons Center, 800 Chisholm Trail Pkwy, Duncan, OK
- September 16 – Enid, Chisholm Trail Expo Center, 111 W Purdue Ave, Enid, OK
- September 21- Warner, Connor's State College 700 College Rd, Warner, OK
- October 5- University of Oklahoma Student Driver Safety for the OU vs. TX Bedlam Road Trip

Rural Roads Work Zone Safety 4H Partnership

The ODOT Highway Safety Plan for 2021 noted that while urban traffic fatalities have decreased, rural traffic fatalities have increased.

Rural roadways account for a disproportionate number of crashes in America, where 19% of the population lives, but 45% of fatal collisions occur. The statistics in Oklahoma are even starker, with 34% of the people residing in rural areas but 65% of fatal crashes occurring on rural roadways. This places Oklahoma well above the national average for rural fatalities.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation is investing significantly to improve rural road safety across the state.

Installing rumble strips on shoulders and the majority of centerline miles to decrease accidental lane departure is estimated to reduce single-vehicle run-off roadway injury and fatal crashes by up to 36%

In the long term, this will represent safer roads, but in the short time will create multiple work zones in rural areas that teen drivers are unprepared to navigate safely.

Work Zone Safe worked with Oklahoma Challenge to form a partnership with Oklahoma 4H to address this risk.

This new partnership allowed 4H Teens from across Oklahoma to be educated and engaged about driver and work zone safety at their 4H Regional Leadership Conferences.



2021 Oklahoma Work Zone Safe 4H Events

- October 14 4H Northeast District Gore, OK Fin, and Feather Resort
- October 14 4H Southeast District Ada OK, Ada Agriplex
- October 15 4H Western District Weatherford, Stafford Air, and Space Museum

Engaging Oklahoma’s Student Council Leaders on Work Zone Safety

Work Zone Safety is best adopted when the message is received teen to teen from fellow peers. The message of Work Zone Safety needs to reach the student leaders within schools across Oklahoma. Oklahoma Work Zone Safe partnered with the Oklahoma Association of Student Councils State Convention.

Over one thousand five hundred student leaders with over two hundred teacher advisors from dozens of schools across Oklahoma attended the conference.

Each student attended a forty-five-minute work zone safety presentation and saw the National Work Zone Memorial. They then had an opportunity to practice engaging their peers in the importance of being a work zone safe driver.

After the conference, a student was selected to receive a \$500 Work Zone Safe Scholarship presented by Representative Nicole Miller, Chairman, Appropriations and Budget Transportation Committee.



Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) Work Zone Safety

Oklahoma was identified by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as one of ten “Opportunity States” identified as being top ten in the country for CMV-related crashes in a work zone based on 2012-2017 fatal crash data.

At the invitation of ODOT, OHSO, and NHTSA Region 6 Administrator Maggie Gunnels Work Zone Safe was invited to participate and present on Oklahoma’s efforts to address CMV- Work Zone incidents by adopting the Work Zone Safe Program.

Tom Robins, the founder of Work Zone Safe, shared the tools, resources, and strategies he had developed to modernize Oklahoma’s education and engagement.

Later this month, in June 2022, Work Zone Safe is jointly presenting with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and Oklahoma Highway Safety Office, FHWA Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMV) Safety in Work Zones Peer Exchange to share best practices.



2022 Spring Oklahoma Teen Driver Events

During the Spring of 2022, work zone safe worked with Oklahoma Challenge to host events for more than 5,000 teens across the state.

Work Zone Safe coordinated directly with ODOT Districts to create an opportunity for teens to hear directly from transportation professionals and go through a mock work zone.

Additionally, ODOT and construction contractors set up a scenario with CMV equipment. This allowed teens to be educated on tailgating, blind spots, distracted driving, the need for reduced speeds, seat belts, or other behaviors that keep themselves and everyone safe within a work zone.

- March 24, 2022- Oklahoma Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) State Convention
- March 28, 2022- Wilburton High School
- April 4, 2022- Oklahoma Union High School/South Coffeyville
- April 6, 2022- Caney High School
- April 12, 2022 – Chisholm Trail Technology Center
- April 22, 2022 – Broken Arrow High School
- April 28, 2022 – Altus High School
- May 3, 2022- Verden High School
- May 6, 2022- Great Plains Tech Center Lawton
- May 11, 2022- Tuttle High School



National Work Zone Safe Awareness Week Oklahoma Teen Driver Event

Oklahoma supported National Work Zone Safe Awareness Week with a first-ever student-focused Work Zone Safe Teen Driver Education Day.

Hosted at Chisholm Trail Technology Center, teens learned hands-on and through in-class instruction on the importance of Work Zone Safety.

After the event, two students were selected to receive a \$500 Work Zone Safe Scholarship.

Work Zone Safe also participated in the moment of silence at the Oklahoma Department of Transportation Memorial.



Modernized Teen Driver Work Zone Safety Education

The primary goal of Oklahoma Work Zone Safe is to bring in those who are not directly in the construction, contractor, first responder, or transportation industry to become partners in work zone safety.

The number one target for this partnership is new teen drivers who are developing lifelong work zone safety habits that will forever impact safety.

Oklahoma teen drivers are at the highest risk of causing crashes, injury, and fatalities but are unprepared to navigate work zones safely.

Oklahoma decided to modernize its work zone safety education by being the first Department of Transportation in the country to license ***Oklahoma Work Zone Safe*** from **WorkZoneSafe.com**.

Oklahoma Work Zone Safe is a free online course that takes 45-60 minutes for Oklahoma teen drivers 15-19 years old to complete.

Teen drivers are taught how to be work zone and safe drivers. They hear directly from transportation professionals, contractors, and emergency responders as they learn work zone safe, behaviors, signs, and laws.

Most importantly, these new drivers learn about the faces in a work zone and from peers and other professionals whose lives have been forever changed by unsafe driving in a work zone.

Recognized and Rewarded

Oklahoma teen drivers who complete the course are recognized and rewarded for being a Work Zone Safe Partner.

Free Jump Pass

Oklahoma teen drivers who complete the course receive a 60-minute jump pass from Sky Zone Trampoline Park in Edmond, Oklahoma.

Insurance Discount

Oklahoma teen drivers are rewarded with a safe driver discount on their car insurance from Cornerstone Insurance.

Work Zone Safe Scholarship

Oklahoma teen drivers who complete the course are entered to win a \$500 Work Zone Safe Educational Scholarship awarded monthly.

Work Zone Safe Scholarship Winners

2021

October: Jesse Castor (Chickasha)

November: Josie Jones (Woodward)

December: Aubreigh Lambert (Vinita)

2022

January: Kaleb Green (Bixby)

February: Britton Barone (Hartshorne)

March: Katie Richmond (Hartshorne)

April: Chloe Lumpkin (Epic Charter) & Tristin Blevins (Lomega)

May: Hannah Robertson (Verden)

Scholarship Sponsors

Association of Oklahoma General Contractors

American Traffic Safety Services Foundation

Pioneer Telephone



Oklahoma Highway Safety Conference

Working with the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office and ODOT, the 2022 Oklahoma Highway Safety Conference will now include two additional work zone safety-focused elements.

Work Zone Safety Awards

Recognizing a teen educator and ODOT Division that has demonstrated a significant contribution to the goals of engaging new teen drivers on Work Zone Safety.

Work Zone Safety Quarterly Meeting

The conference will host a Quarterly Meeting of the Oklahoma Work Zone Safety Coalition as a break-out session highlighting work zone safety efforts.