Spot The Safety Violation: Staying Alert Is Key to Safety



There are a number of safety hazards in this picture of a road work zone’how many can you spot’

This time of year, many jurisdictions launch road work safety campaigns, reminding drivers to slow down and be careful when passing workers in constructions zones on roads and highways.

But as this photo from WorkSafeBC shows, workers themselves must also exercise caution when working along roads.

For example, they shouldn’t be using their cell phones or other electronic devices, such as the worker on the left who’s looking at his cell phone or MP3 player. Such devices distract workers when they should be especially at alert.

Workers in road work zones should also wear vests or other clothing to make them highly visible to drivers. Two workers in this picture have on bright orange vests but the third worker on the left doesn’t. (He also doesn’t have on a hardhat.)

And although the two workers in the vests are properly attired, they’re not paying any attention to their surroundings, which could be dangerous given that there’s a

vehicle about to pass close by them.

Plus, they're oblivious to the fact that there's a woman walking her dog through their work zone! Someone should really be telling her to take another route.

Bottom line: Workers in road work zones really need to be on their toes and paying attention to their surroundings and passing motorists. So bar workers from using electronic devices, including cell phones, iPods, tablets and the like, in road work zones. Also, when training workers who work in such zones, stress the need for them to stay alert at all times'and to wear appropriate PPE and safety vests.

Take 4 Steps to Protect Workers in Road Work Zones

Workers shouldn't be left to fend for themselves in road work zones. Instead, you should develop and implement a traffic control plan to keep workers from getting struck by passing drivers. In fact, the OHS laws in several jurisdictions require the use of such plans.

To do so, take the following four steps:

1. Assess the aspects of the work site's location, such as the type of road, approaches to the work area, speed limit, traffic volume, shoulders, weather conditions and any site hazards.

2. Assess the work to be done, such as where it'll be done (on the road, on the shoulder, etc.), whether the site is stationary or moving, access/egress to the site, type of work, equipment involved and hours of work.

3. Based on the hazards identified in the above assessments, develop a traffic control plan that spells out the safety measures you'll use to protect workers from these hazards. This form can help you develop an appropriate traffic control plan.

4. Train all workers who’ll be working in the road work zone’whether performing the actual work or acting as traffic control persons or ‘flaggers”on the traffic control plan for that zone. And make sure a copy of the plan is available at the work site at all times.

New Brunswick’s Work Area Traffic Control Manual has a lot of detailed information on protecting workers in road work zones, including layouts of traffic zones for various kinds of roads.