

BC's Cone Zone: Increasing safety for roadside workers

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Cone Zone, British Columbia's ninth annual, multi-organizational, multi-media campaign to raise awareness about and encourage shared responsibility for the safety of British Columbia's roadside workers launched on May 13, 2019.

In 2018, two roadside workers died as a result of being hit by a motor vehicle and another 29 were injured and missed time from work. Between 2009 and 2018, 13 roadside workers were killed and 213 were injured under similar circumstances. Hundreds of roadside work zones will be set up across British Columbia this spring and summer, and every day, tens of thousands of British Columbians -- first responders, truck drivers, road builders, landscapers, flag people, tow truck operators, telecommunications and utility workers, municipal workers, security guards and more -- work alongside roadways.

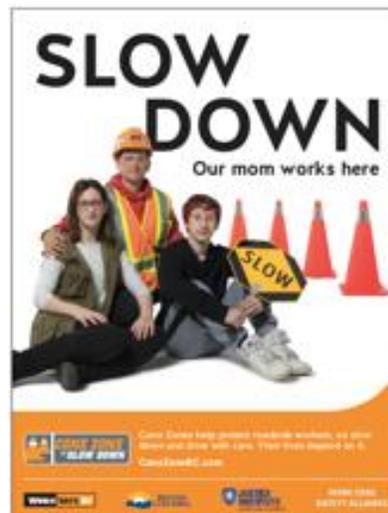


In an effort to reduce the number of injuries and deaths of roadside workers in British Columbia, a group of stakeholders — representing government, crown corporations, statutory agencies, and private organizations — came together to take action. The goal of this group, called the Work Zone Safety Alliance is to collaborate to improve safe driving behaviour and workplace safety practices in roadside work zones.

Today 20 organizations are members of the Alliance, each with a strong interest in improving roadside worker safety across the province. The Alliance is rolling out a growing, sophisticated, and targeted approach to raise awareness of the risks workers face in roadside work zones.

The keys to Cone Zone's success are the reach that it engenders through its partnership and stakeholder engagement, as well as its multi-media promotional campaign. Success of the campaign has stimulated more interest as more organizations request to participate each year.

The Cone Zone campaign relies on paid, earned (e.g., news coverage), and social media; a dedicated website (ConeZoneBC.com); electronic highway message signs; employer and worker resource toolkits; and popular family events to deliver the message to Slow Down and Pay Attention around the ubiquitous orange cones typically used to mark roadside work zones. Ads and brochures rely on images of actual roadside workers with their sons and daughters. The messaging is from those children to the driving public reminding them, “My mommy/daddy works here.” This stark statement has been found to strongly resonate with the public whose recall of the ad is consistently high.



The key messages to drivers are to:

1. Slow down before reaching a Cone Zone and obey the posted speed limit.
2. When entering a roadside work zone pay attention and avoid distractions. Leave your phone alone.
3. Pay attention to temporary road signs, traffic cones and directions given by a traffic control person.
4. Plan ahead. *Listen to traffic reports before and during your drive – and where possible - adjust your route to avoid work zones.*
5. Respect the roadside as a workplace. Driving unsafely in a Cone Zone puts both you and roadside workers at risk. Orange cones are often the only things separating them from your vehicle.
6. Comply with the Motor Vehicle Act, and Slow Down and Move Over for any vehicle displaying flashing amber, red and blue lights. While they don't always display lights, this directive also applies when drivers see vehicles operated by landscapers, utility workers, garbage collectors, tow truck companies and others. If the posted speed limit is *greater* than 80 km/h, slow to 70km/h. If the posted speed is *less* than 80 km/h, slow to 40 km/h. In both situations, move over if it's safe to do so.

In addition to key messages for the public, the campaign emphasizes the concept of shared employer and worker responsibility for roadside safety. Employers' legal responsibility to ensure the health and safety of their workers and contractors extends to ensuring they understand the hazards related to working at the roadside and provide their workers (and contractors) with training, equipment, resources and supervision.



Similarly, roadside workers are expected to:

- Know how to identify hazards and assess risks,
- Follow safe work procedures as well as setup and take-down regulations,
- Wear appropriate high-visibility clothing, and
- Report unsafe conditions to their supervisor.

The mid-May campaign kicked off with a robust enforcement event involving a partnership of the RCMP Lower Mainland District Integrated Road Safety Unit, WorkSafeBC, and the Work Zone Safety Alliance. During the morning enforcement blitz at a roadside worksite, police were ticketing drivers for unsafe and illegal driving practices including using an electronic device, speeding, and disobeying a Traffic Control Person. It ends on August 31 to cover the most active road maintenance period of the year, which coincides with the heavy summer tourist and travel driving season.



The RCMP Lower Mainland Integrated Road Safety Unit partnered with the Work Zone Safety Alliance and WorkSafeBC with an enforcement blitz at a Cone Zone in Burnaby.

The Alliance gauges the campaign's effectiveness via a third-party research firm to measure advertising recall, perceived effectiveness of ads, as well as attitudes, perceptions and knowledge about safe driving practices around construction zones. The last survey in 2018 indicated an all-time high brand awareness, but alarming levels of distraction, with 68% of respondents admitting to moderate distractions at least weekly while driving. Of positive note, significantly more drivers surveyed believed they are fully responsible for the safety of roadside workers (22% to 30%) and are slowing down even when workers are not visible (59% to 64%).

About the Work Zone Safety Alliance

Road Safety at Work is a WorkSafeBC-funded initiative managed by the Justice Institute of BC which aims to prevent workplace motor vehicle incidents in British Columbia by offering free online resources, courses, workshops, webinars and advisory services. The Cone Zone campaign is a joint provincial initiative supported by organizations committed to improving the safety of roadside workers. They are Ambulance Paramedics of B.C., Automotive Retailers Association, BCAA, B.C. Construction Safety Alliance, B.C. Flagging Association, B.C. Landscape and Nursery Association, B.C. Municipal Safety Association, B.C. Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association, City of Prince George, City of Surrey, Government of B.C., International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 258, Insurance Corporation of B.C., Justice Institute of British Columbia, LiUNA Local 1611, RCMP, SafetyDriven, Telus, Lower Mainland police and WorkSafeBC.