

**APRIL 26, 2021**

Albany, NY

**Governor Cuomo Announces State Police "Operation Hardhat" to Take Place Across New York as Part of National Work Zone Awareness Week**

*State Police to Conduct New "Operation Hardhat" Details to Crackdown on Reckless Driving in Work Zones*

*Thruway Authority Announces New Maintenance Vehicles with Special Technology to Enhance Work Zone Safety*

*Department of Transportation to Unveil New Social Media Campaign #ISlowDownFor Featuring DOT Workers and Their Families*

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that the New York State Police will conduct "Operation Hardhat" enforcement activities all week in support of [National Work Zone Awareness Week](#), which takes place from April 26 to April 30. During Operation Hardhat, members of the State Police patrol Department of Transportation and Thruway Authority work zones to enforce work zone speed limits and ensure that motorists are obeying flagging personnel. As part of this commemoration, DOT is unveiling a new social media campaign to promote work zone safety and the Thruway Authority unveiled new highway maintenance vehicles with large digital displays alerting motorists of their speed in work zones.

"More and more New Yorkers will take to the roads as our state's economy gradually reopens and recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, and that means it's going to become even more important to ensure everyone is driving safely," **Governor Cuomo said**. "During National Work Zone Awareness Week, it's critical to remember the dangers that transportation workers and law enforcement personnel face on our highways and that we do everything we can to support them. New York State has zero tolerance for drivers who endanger our dedicated workforce and through Operation Hardhat, we will make it clear that anyone who disregards these laws will be held accountable."

Maintenance workers and emergency responders from the Thruway Authority, DOT, and the New York State Police kicked off National Work Zone Awareness Week Monday at the Western New York Welcome Center on Grand Island. The event featured the testimonial of retired Thruway Maintenance Worker Peter Symanowicz. In 2019, Symanowicz was one of two Thruway Maintenance Workers involved in a serious crash in the Westfield Maintenance Section where a tractor trailer rear-ended their Thruway pickup truck and narrowly missed the two crew members.

During the campaign, the New York State Police will assign additional patrols to work zones across the state to enforce the State's vehicle and traffic laws. This is in addition to more than 75 Traffic Incident Management troopers and supervisors who are specially trained to conduct dedicated passenger and commercial vehicle enforcement in and around major, active work zones and targeted enforcement in identified problem areas.

Last year, 1,770 tickets were issued by State Police during "Operation Hardhat" activities, which surpassed 2019's total by nearly 70 percent.

DOT is launching a new social media campaign #ISlowDownFor featuring employees who work on the roads and their families. The campaign will include photos of maintenance and construction workers with their family members, who always slow down in work zones in order to keep their family and other workers safe. The campaign is meant to humanize those who work on highways and bridges, reminding the driving public to always be alert and slow down when driving through work zones.

DOT works year-round to enhance safety for its workforce. Portable rumble strips that precede work zones and prevent distracted driving are now being utilized in every region of the state for maintenance and contractor project work zones to better protect flaggers and transportation workers. Work zone cameras are also being implemented in DOT maintenance work zones and contractor project work zones across New York to better protect transportation workers.

This year, the Thruway Authority is deploying more than a dozen new trucks throughout its four maintenance divisions across the state featuring enhanced technology focused directly on improving work zone safety. The vehicles include large radar board displays that alert motorists of the work zone speed limit compared to their approach speed, directional arrows, traffic attenuators, and wider reinforced man buckets with swing gates to allow for easier and safer deployment or removal of cones and barrels.

**New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez said,** "It's imperative that motorists know the hazards our workers face and National Work Zone Awareness Week is an important way to bring heightened awareness to this issue. I thank our partners in law enforcement for their continued efforts to enforce safety in our work zones this week and throughout the year."

**New York State Thruway Authority Executive Director Matthew J. Driscoll said,** "Our maintenance crews encounter close calls on the road almost every day. Just this year alone, there have been three work zone intrusions involving Thruway Authority maintenance staff and vehicles with flashing lights and fortunately they were not injured but let's be clear - This is simply unacceptable. Day in and day out, roadside workers and emergency responders risk their lives in order to keep us safe on the road. Please pay attention when driving and be alert through work zones. Nothing is worth risking someone else's life."

**Acting State Police Superintendent Kevin P. Bruen said,** "As construction season gets underway and more drivers take to our roadways, it is imperative for drivers to watch their speed, stay alert, and put down their electronic devices when traveling through work zones. Highways are one of the most dangerous work environments for law enforcement, emergency responders and highway workers. All too often, we see the tragedies that result from drivers not following the rules of the road in work zones. We are committed to creating safer work zones for those who work there. To drivers: slow down and move over when you see an emergency vehicle or maintenance crew on the shoulder of a road."

**CSEA President Mary E. Sullivan said,** "Transportation workers put their lives on the line every day they work on our roads, bridges and highways, to make sure they're safe for the motoring public. Our union has lost too many members in work zone accidents. We appreciate the efforts of the governor working to ensure the safety of our members and we will continue to work together to prevent future tragedies."

Recognizing and understanding signs leading up to and within a work zone is essential for the safety of all drivers and roadside workers. Motorists are reminded that fines are doubled for speeding in a work zone, and in accordance with the Work Zone Safety Act of 2005, convictions of two or more speeding violations in a work zone could result in the suspension of an individual's driver license. More work zone safety tips can be found at [thruway.ny.gov](http://thruway.ny.gov).

Maintenance crews across the state work alongside fast-moving traffic each day, knowing their lives depend on drivers being alert, patient and cautious. It is critically important that motorists eliminate distractions, pay attention to driving and move over for workers.

As construction season begins, more maintenance and work crews will be out on the road performing repairs and improvements to ensure roads are safe for motorists. All travelers should be prepared to reduce speeds and to be alert when passing through work zones. Since 2000, National Work Zone Awareness Week has been recognized by the Federal Highway Administration. This year's theme is: ["Drive Safe. Work Safe. Save Lives."](#)