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Construction zone signs are there for a reason

Slow down in construction zones -- even when workers aren't visible

Edmonton...While most people understand the need for reduced speeds in an active construction zone, they question why the signs and reduced speeds stay in effect when there are neither workers nor equipment in the area.

The answer is that there may be "hidden hazards" in the area such as uneven pavement, loose gravel chips, sharp shoulders or the temporary removal of safety features such as guardrails and medians. These hazards may cause collisions and/or damage to vehicles if encountered at a high speed. In these cases, the construction zone warning signs and speed reductions remain in place to protect motorists.

The Alberta government and its consulting engineer and construction partners keep traffic disruptions to a minimum while ensuring safety on the worksite. Contracts require consultants and construction companies to manage construction zones properly and they can be penalized financially for failing to do so.

Warning signs and speed reductions often take effect at relatively long distances from the actual construction site. This gives larger vehicles such as transport trucks the longer distances they need to slow down or stop. The advanced warning also gives motorists opportunities to merge when lane closures are part of the construction zone.

In 2004, there were 698 collisions in construction zones that resulted in six deaths and 165 injuries. To reduce these numbers, the Alberta government recently amended the *Traffic Safety Act* to double the fine for speeding in construction zones **when workers are present**. Construction zone signs indicate the beginning and end of the "double the fines" areas on provincial highways.

In addition to the new legislation, the Partners in Road Construction Safety are conducting a multi-media campaign to promote construction zone safety during this year's construction season. The partners include the Alberta government, Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association, Alberta Construction Safety Association, Cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, and St. Albert, Strathcona County, ENMAX, and EPCOR.

For more information on road safety, visit www.saferoads.com.

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