



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Diane J. Savino

Senator Savino Kicks off National Work Zone Awareness Week

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April 22, 2010

ISSUE:

- [Transportation](#)



Renewed call for state legislation to criminalize work-zone incidents

(New York) Senator Diane Savino, joined New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, Federal Highway Administrator (FHWA) Victor Mendez and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Acting Commissioner Stanley Gee to kick off National Work Zone Awareness Week, highlighting the dangers to roadway crews and calling on motorists to drive with care in roadway work zones. More than 40,000 people are injured each year in motor vehicle crashes in work zones nationwide, and more than 700 people died in work zone-related incidents in 2008. The Commissioner was joined by Administrator Mendez and Commissioner Gee at a solemn event this morning in Battery Park, where they held observances at a memorial wall listing the names of 1,357 workers killed in work zone incidents nationwide. Dozens of NYCDOT workers attended the event, many in memory of their fallen colleague, road repairer Nicky Antico, who was struck and killed by a speeding motorist in a closed work zone on Staten Island in 2005. Antico's widow, Anna, also attended the event.

"The streets of New York are the work places for the men and women who take care of the city's infrastructure, and they must be treated as the safe, inviolate places they are," said NYC DOT Commissioner Sadik-Khan. "Workers like Nicky deserve our attention and care when we're on the road, and they deserve the protection of our laws, which must be strengthened to make it a crime to violate a work zone."

In New York City, six NYCDOT workers have died in work zone incidents in the last 20 years. To help drive down these numbers and to raise awareness of the dangers of reckless driving in active construction areas, NYCDOT, in conjunction with FHWA and NYSDOT, unveiled a dramatic new ad campaign to air statewide. One of the ad campaigns shows an orange traffic cone knocked on its side with the tagline, "Work Zones Need Our Undivided Attention." A second campaign shows the black-and-white images and heartfelt testimonials of New York City residents who have lost loved ones in work zone incidents. Advertisements will appear in print and on the radio for the coming week and can be reviewed at www.nyc.gov/dot.

NYC DOT has made work zone safety a priority on its legislative agenda, calling for Albany to pass legislation sponsored by state Senator Diane Savino and Assemblyman Michael Cusick to create laws for vehicular assault and vehicular manslaughter in the first and second degrees in active work zones throughout the state. Currently, motorists who enter a work zone cannot be cited for any infraction. Under the proposed legislation, the new crime of intrusion into an active work zone would also be created, subjecting offenders to a \$250 - \$500 fine and/or a maximum sentence of three months imprisonment.

“On the morning of September 22, 2005, right here in Staten Island, City Highway Repairman Nick Antico, was struck and killed by a driver who recklessly entered a work zone. He was going twice the speed limit,” said Senator Diane Savino. “The men and women who get up early every day, strap on their boots and head off to repair or maintain our roads, make our city run. They should not have to worry about risking their lives because of careless or irresponsible drivers. This bill will establish tough new penalties for injuring or killing a construction worker as well as prevent accidents by criminalizing the intrusion of a work zone,” added the Senator.

“There have been too many instances where someone's reckless behavior has injured or even killed road construction workers,” said Assemblyman Michael Cusick. “It’s my hope that my legislation will make accidents like this a thing of the past by creating more severe penalties for this type of inexcusable carelessness.”

National Work Zone Awareness Week is a national campaign conducted at the start of construction season to encourage safe driving through highway construction sites. While it is observed nationally by state, local and federal transportation officials for one week in April, its message resonates year round as men and women work diligently 365 days, seven days a week to maintain the streets, roadways, highways, tunnels and bridges that comprise the nation’s infrastructure.

For more information on National Work Zone Awareness Week, visit
www.nyc.gov/dot.