

Topic of the Month: Roadway Safety

We've all been tempted. A quick glance at a text, a moment spent adjusting the radio, a tap on our car's touchscreen. All are seemingly small actions that can lead to tragic outcomes.

Despite ongoing driver awareness campaigns and a 2017 state law banning texting and driving, distracted driving continues to plague Texas roadways. Distracted driving was responsible for 94,330 crashes in Texas in 2023, according to the Texas Department of Transportation; nearly 2,800 people were seriously injured as a result, and almost 400 died.

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, so the North Central Texas Council of Governments is devoting the Topic of the Month to exploring the multifaceted challenges of roadway safety such as distracted driving. To make us all better, smarter and safer drivers, below are tips and resources covering the "four E's" of transportation safety: education, enforcement, engineering and emergency response.

Roadway Safety Plan

When it comes to roadway safety, the Regional Transportation Council believes no transportation-related death is acceptable. First responders work tirelessly to ensure drivers are obeying the law so they can arrive at their destinations safely. But a safe transportation system also requires drivers to exercise responsibility when they get behind the wheel.

Safe transportation relies on both responsible driving and sound infrastructure. NCTCOG has developed the Roadway Safety Plan, a comprehensive strategy aimed at eradicating roadway fatalities by 2050. The plan uses in-depth regional safety analyses to pinpoint high-risk crash types and locations and then prescribes targeted countermeasures to prevent such crashes or minimize their severity.

The plan also identifies and prioritizes roadway segments with a history of severe crashes, recommending engineering upgrades and other safety countermeasures. Ultimately, the Roadway Safety Plan will guide the implementation of future safety projects and programs, propelling North Texas toward its goal of zero roadway fatalities by 2050. More information about NCTCOG's Roadway Safety Plan can be found [here](#).

Distracted Driving Awareness Month

While many drivers are aware of the risks involved, the temptation to multitask behind the wheel remains a persistent problem. Distracted Driving Awareness Month helps bring to light the many ways drivers can travel distraction-free.

The Texas Department of Transportation offers these tips:

- **Phones down:** Turn it off or use your phone's settings to block texts and calls while driving.
- **Pull over:** Come to a complete stop before you use your phone, eat, or do anything that interferes with driving.
- **Tell them:** Let your friends, family, and coworkers know that you won't respond to texts or calls while driving.
- **Be aware:** Pay attention to your surroundings. Be aware of pedestrians, cyclists and construction zones.

It's not just calls and text messages that can distract drivers. Social media can be equally distracting, especially if you're prone to scroll or have phone notifications turned on. If you struggle to ignore notifications while driving, set your phone to "Do Not Disturb" or place your phone in the glove compartment until you reach your destination.

National Work Zone Awareness Week – April 21-25

Whenever you see flashing lights, orange cones and barrels, and heavy machinery on the roadway, chances are you're about to come upon a construction zone. While you may be in for a delay, it's good to remember why those crews are so hard at work at all hours of the day and night: to improve the roads.

National Work Zone Awareness Week is an annual spring campaign designed to encourage safe driving through roadway work zones. In 2023, more than 26,000 traffic crashes occurred in work zones in Texas, resulting in 190 deaths and another 803 serious injuries, according to the Texas Department of Transportation.

Work zones can present a challenging environment for drivers to navigate, including uneven pavement, narrow lanes, and slow-moving heavy equipment. TxDOT recommends these five tips:

- **Slow down.** Follow the posted work zone speed limit and never drive faster than what is safe for road conditions.
- **Pay attention.** Avoid distractions, keep your mind on the road, and put your phone away.
- **Don't tailgate.** Give yourself room to stop quickly, should you need to. Rear-end collisions are the most common work zone crashes.
- **Watch out for road crews.** Always follow instructions and be mindful of construction area road signs.

- **Allow extra time.** If you're aware of road construction in your area and you can't avoid it, plan for it.

Additional resources

For comprehensive roadway safety information, area residents can turn to several websites. LookOutTexans.org is an education program designed by the North Central Texas Council of Governments that encourages drivers to share the roads with bicyclists, pedestrians, and other vehicle drivers. For real-time traffic updates, www.511dfw.org is an essential tool. Additionally, www.DriveAwareNTX.org offers educational materials and programs aimed at promoting attentive driving and preventing crashes in North Texas.