

Every day, Minnesota's state, county, and city highway workers patch potholes, repair guardrails and fencing, address road buckles, clear snow and ice, stripe roads, build and maintain bridges, and perform field repairs on our fleet of maintenance vehicles—often inches from live traffic. Our work zones are our office. Distracted driving, speeding, and cell phone use have increased in recent years, and too many of our crews—and motorists—are paying the price.

Other states are demonstrating effective responses we can learn from. New York has implemented an “Operation Hard Hat” initiative that pairs visible, targeted enforcement in work zones with broad public outreach to slow drivers down, reduce distractions, and move over for roadside workers. Early reporting shows stepped-up enforcement and education are focusing drivers’ attention where it belongs: on the road and on the lives at stake. ny.gov/wbng.com.

Minnesota can pursue a similar approach with bipartisan support from legislators, State Patrol, county sheriffs, local police, MnDOT, contractors, and our labor partners (LIUNA, Operating Engineers Local 49, AFSCME, and others).

The goals are Straightforward

- Slow down in work zones, eliminate distracted driving, and increase move-over compliance.
- Protect workers and motorists alike.
- Use targeted enforcement and education to change behavior, not simply to issue tickets.



OPERATION HARD HAT

Endorsing stronger work zone safety measures and Operation Hard Hat-style enforcement in Minnesota.

We also support high-visibility public education. A proposed “View the Carnage” safety showcase at Maple Grove and Oakdale Truck Stations—staging damaged attenuators, wrecked signs, equipment and damaged FIRST trucks—would powerfully illustrate the human and economic cost of inattention.

We recommend inviting Minnesota State Patrol, county sheriffs, local agencies, the press, and legislators for firsthand context.

The Path Forward

1. Advance Operation Hard Hat-style enforcement authority and resources in statute or policy.
2. Expand automated and on-site speed enforcement and move-over enforcement in active work zones.
3. Fund sustained public outreach highlighting real Minnesota incidents and near-misses.
4. Improve data collection and rapid reporting of work zone intrusions to guide enforcement.

Minnesota's road workers want what every driver wants: to get home safely.

With coordinated enforcement, education, and data-driven action,
we can save lives in our work zones.