

More road work, more danger signs

A few years ago, an Oakland County Road Commission employee working on the shoulder of a road was killed when a motorist went the wrong way around a flashing arrow board. Although it wasn't enough in that instance, arrow boards are meant to protect road crews from traffic. Additional protections include warning signs, sawhorses, barrels, reflective vests, helmets, impact attenuators and blockade trucks.

These efforts are costly to the taxpayers. People often complain about the "idle" truck and the necessary driver.

YET WITH or without the protection, most motorists would not put themselves in the place of the road worker, says John L. Grubba, managing director of the Oakland County Road Commission. In few other occupations are workers constantly in close proximity to thousands of unpredictable, usually speeding, passers-by.

State law says the maximum speed in a road-work zone is 45 miles per hour. In practice, few drivers slow down to anything near that speed. Sometimes even 45 miles per hour is

too fast in a work zone that's tucked up close to traffic as it sometimes must be if through traffic is to be allowed during construction. Ironically, more motorists and their passengers than road workers are killed and maimed in road-work zone accidents. Twelve persons were killed and 1,024 injured in 3,231 construction zone accidents last year, according to State Police.

THERE WILL be many more road-work zones on Oakland County roads this year than last, said Grubba. The Road Commission has 112 im-

provement projects under way at a cost of \$25 million. Resurfacing projects alone will jump from zero to 16, averaging more than a mile each. There are 20 rather than 12 projects intended specifically to improve road safety. And that doesn't count the hundreds of road crews at impromptu locations for road maintenance, such things as pavement patching, shoulder repairs, guardrail replacement, mowing and other tasks. The biggest favor motorists can do for road crews, and themselves, is "slow down for road-work zones."



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