

The LABOR Paper

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Work Zone Awareness Week: 'Respect the Zone so we all get Home'



Matt Bartolo (right), business manager with Laborers Local 165, speaks about work zone awareness week.

SPRINGFIELD – With construction ramping up across the state, the Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois State Police, Illinois Tollway, industry partners, local agencies and frontline construction workers today teamed up for National Work Zone Awareness Week to remind the public to “Respect the zone so we all get home.”

“Whatever the mode of transportation, we will all be traveling through work zones over the upcoming weeks and months,” said Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Gia Biagi. “The people you see working on our roads, on equipment, or behind the cones and barricades are someone’s loved one, a friend, a neighbor, part of our community. Working together, we can ensure their safety and yours. Let’s make this the safest construction season ever in Illinois.”

The theme for this year’s National Work Zone Awareness Week is “Respect the zone so we all get home,” reinforcing the message that your undivided attention and caution is necessary at all times when traveling through work zones to protect everyone in them – workers, drivers and their passengers, bicyclists, and

pedestrians. When you are behind the wheel and approach a work zone, eliminate all distractions, decrease your speed and proceed with care and consideration for others.

To call attention to the heightened risks of work zones, Gov. JB Pritzker has proclaimed April 21-25 as “Work Zone Safety Awareness Week” in Illinois. This week, IDOT is once again holding “tailgate talks” at the start of the day to give workers refreshers on work zone protocol.

At all times during construction season, the public should be ready for lane closures, changes in traffic patterns, reduced speed limits and the presence of workers and equipment. This year, IDOT is strengthening its effort to make work zones safer, including expanding the use of speed safety vans and deploying more temporary rumble strips approaching projects. As part of the It’s Not a Game safety campaign, high-traffic work zones will be geotargeted so drivers can hear streaming audio ads, reinforcing safety messages.

“Road workers are out there repairing and maintaining the highways we drive every day to make them safer for us,” said ISP

Director Brendan F. Kelly. “Be a decent human being and respect them and the work they do by slowing down and giving them room so everyone can go home safely.”

Each year, an average of nearly 6,300 crashes occurs in Illinois work zones, resulting in more than 1,600 injuries. Preliminary statistics for 2024 show that 13 people died in work zones in Illinois, including four workers, a reminder that crashes in work zones generally have a much greater impact on drivers and their passengers.

“Our highest priority is protecting everyone who uses or works on our roads, and that commitment extends to providing the safest possible work zones as we reconstruct and improve our system, but we’re reminding our customers we need their help,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Cassaundra Rouse. “Drivers must do their part to protect workers, emergency responders and themselves by taking additional precautions in work zones, including slowing down, following posted speed limits and putting away cellphones to avoid distracted driving. Working together with our customers makes our roads safer for everyone.”

The following guidelines for traveling through work zones should be followed at all times:

- Drop it and drive. Phones and electronic devices down at all times – it’s the law.
- Obey the signs. They will help you safely navigate work zones – and sometimes avoid delays.
- Slow down. The posted speed limits are there for the safety of workers and you.
- Be on the lookout for slowed or stopped traffic.
- Give yourself time to react. Avoid following too closely and maintain at least two seconds of space in front of you.
- Consider the limitations of heavy equipment, trucks and commercial vehicles. Provide them extra distance to come to a complete stop if they are behind you.
- Remember that a work zone can take many forms: a maintenance crew patching potholes or collecting litter, a major interstate reconstruction, a minor repair on a neighborhood street or a utility company out in the field. If you see orange, slow down and save lives.

For additional facts, printable materials and information on projects this year in Illinois, visit idot.click/work-zones.

Workers Memorial Events:

Galesburg - Monday, April 28

5:30 p.m. - 1640 N Henderson St, Galesburg

Peoria - Monday, April 28

6 p.m. - Workers Memorial Monument Site
Peoria City Hall, 419 Fulton St.

Jason Emerick with Ironworkers Local 112 will be speaking

Bloomington-Normal - Monday April 28 at 6 a.m. at White Oak Park, 1514 Cottage Avenue in Bloomington. The next evening, April 29, at 6:30 p.m. is a panel discussion in conjunction with the “Deadly Deception: Asbestos in McLean County” exhibit.

4th Annual International Mother Jones Festival: Sunday May 4

The 4th annual International Mother Jones Festival is set for Sunday, May 4, from 1 pm to 5 pm in downtown Mt. Olive, IL, and in Union Miners' Cemetery, where Jones is buried.

Included in the event is Music by Casting Runes, Wildflower Conspiracy, and Piasa Canyon. For the young at heart, there will be a magic and medicine show by Dr. Longhair, Randy Thompson, the Macoupin

County Art Collective or MAC, will have a program for the young which includes making shoes similar to the ones Jones took to striking miners in West Virginia, plus performances by Loretta Williams as Jones for the young and old alike.

Williams is the only MJ actor to portray her in both the country and place of her birth, City Cork, Ireland and at her final resting place in UMC. She will have a special program in the library.

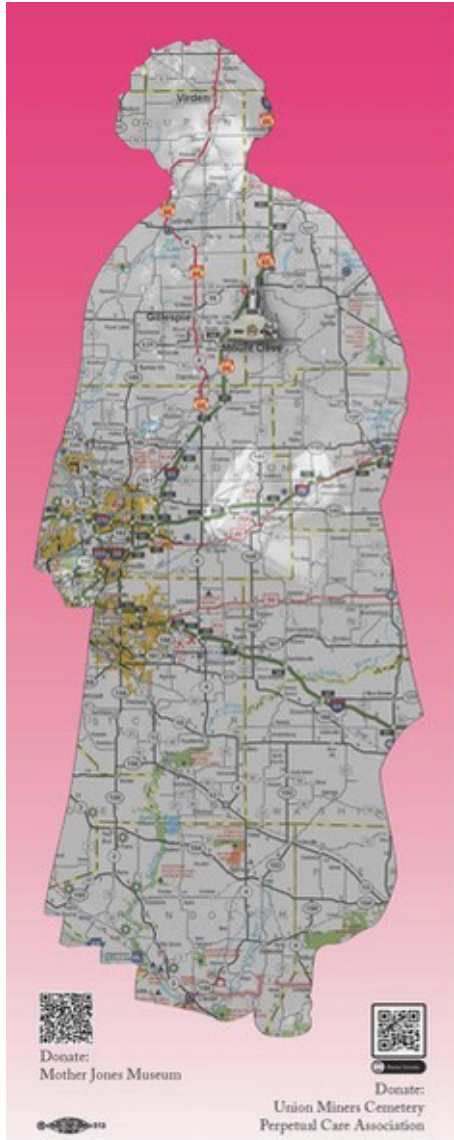
A shuttle bus is provided for those who wish to travel between downtown and UMC. There will be docents in the cemetery and The Friends of Mother Jones Museum for guided tours.

Kazoo Coffee will provide coffee, including their Hell Raiser blend created to honor Jones, B&K Bakery cookies, and various food and drinks.

In case of inclement weather, the downtown activities will move inside the City Hall and the library. Festival organizers suggest you bring a lawn chair.

For further information MJ Museum- 618 659 8759

Email: friendsofmotherjonesmuseum@gmail.com



4th annual International Mother Jones Festival Mt. Olive

Sunday, May 4th, 1 pm to 5 pm
Main St. at the Mother Jones Museum

Music: Casting Runes, Wildflower Conspiracy, Piasa Canyon

Magic & Medicine Show: Dr. Longhair - Randy Thompson

MAC Art Bus program for children

Mother Jones program for children

Food: Kazoo Coffee, B & K Bakery Cookies, sandwiches and cabbage rolls - Local vendors, sodas and lemonade

Mother Jones Memorabilia

Mt. Olive Public Library Mother Jones Exhibit

Shuttle Bus to Union Miners Cemetery

Union Miners Cemetery Docents and Tours

Mother Jones Museum Tours

Mt. Olive Mother Jones Museum and City Hall
215 East Main Street, Mt. Olive, IL 62069
City Hall: 217 999 4261 (8:30-4:30, M-F)
Museum contact: 618 659 8759
email: friendsofmotherjonesmuseum@gmail.com



**Saturday,
May 10, 2025**

Simply leave your donation of non-perishable food in a bag near your mailbox on May 10, and your letter carrier will do the rest.

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