



Whitaker Contracting Corporation and Guntersville City Schools wants you to *Put Down the Phone* and pay attention while you drive, particularly in road construction work zones.

Whitaker Contracting Corporation and Guntersville City Schools have partnered with Alabama Struck-by Alliance, sponsored by OSHA, which will again use National Work Zone Safety Week in April to publicize the dangers of talking and text-messaging on cell phones while driving. The April 6-10 campaign will include roadside billboards asking drivers

“R U In-text-icated? - Put Down the Phone”.

“We want people to understand the dangers of driving through work zones while distracted by cell phones especially texting” said Charlotte Kopf, Alabama AGC Mobile Section Manager and Chair of the Alabama Struck By Alliance Committee.

Personnel of the Safety Management section of the Department of Transportation is working on putting together the draft for Governor Riley to acknowledge April 6th to the 10th as “Alabama Put Down the Phone Week”.

The **“Alabama Struck-By Alliance”** began in 2001 when Paul Weaver, President of H.O. Weaver & Sons, Inc. in Mobile, was discussing a fatal struck-by accident with the Mobile OSHA Area Director, Lana Graves. She suggested he contact the local trade associations he was involved with to form an Alliance, which could provide desperately needed struck-by training to contractors statewide. Weaver, a Past President of Alabama Road Builders Association and a member of AlabamaAGC began talking with these groups. The Alliance has since grown to include 12 groups whose common goal is to provide safety training to contractor employees and awareness of work zone dangers to the driving public .

From 2005 through 2007, 101 people died in road work zone crashes in Alabama, according to the CARE Research and Development Laboratory at the University of Alabama. In that same period, 1,651 people were injured in such crashes, said Dave Brown, deputy director of the CRDL.

Although numbers aren't available to show how many work zone crashes in Alabama involved drivers using cell phones at the time of the accident, studies are mounting that show cell phone use while driving is distracting and dangerous.

The University of Utah, in a study published December 2008 in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, found that drivers on cell phones were four times more likely to fail at basic driving tasks than those talking with a passenger. "Common sense would tell us that if it is bad in general, it is going to be even worse when we get into a work-zone situation," Brown said. A crash within a work zone is almost twice as likely to result in a fatality as one outside a work zone, he said.

Alabama doesn't have a law restricting cell use while driving, but bills that would make it a crime to text or talk on a hand-held phone while driving have been introduced in the current session of the Alabama House of Representatives. Seven states and the District of Columbia have laws banning sending text messages while driving, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Amy Davidson works with Whitaker Contracting of Guntersville to spread the message that cell phone use and driving don't mix. She and her husband, James, know the real misery that cocktail can bring.

James Davidson, 44, also a Whitaker employee, was almost killed in December 2006 when a driver entered a paving work zone on U.S. 431 near Sardis and plowed into an arrow board. James Davidson stood behind the sign. He was thrown into the air and suffered a traumatic brain injury. He was airlifted to a hospital in Huntsville, transferred a few weeks later to an Atlanta hospital, and went home from the hospital in March 2007. Whitaker Contracting launched Whitaker's Work Zone Safety Program, it was designed to help increase public awareness of the dangers to motorists and workers in roadway work zones, and encourage all motorists to pay "extra Attention" while traveling Alabama's Roads and Highways. On Whitaker's web site is also a teen page "Helping Teen Drivers Be Survivors" to learn more visit www.whitakercontractingcorp.com .

The next time you are driving through a work zone remember to "Put down the Phone".

With the support of Marshall County PALS(People Against A Littered State) partnering with Whitaker Contracting we will continue to be proactive in promoting clean and safe roads and highways throughout Alabama.

Slow Down! Be Alert!