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Speeding in the I-595 construction zone will get you a hefty fine

Troopers begin speeding crackdown this week

By Michael Turnbull, Sun Sentinel

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Interstate 595 is Otto Elmer's office.

Every day he and hundreds of other construction workers excavate dirt and pour asphalt inches away from the never-ending stream of traffic. If any one of those drivers takes their eyes off the road or goes hurtling by too fast, the results could be deadly.

"We want to remind them of the dangers of driving around a project like this," Elmer said.

That's why Florida Highway Patrol troopers will be out in force starting this week, especially in the overnight hours, pulling over lead-footed drivers who refuse to obey the reduced 55-speed limit in the I-595 construction zone.

The crackdown coincides with Work Zone Safety Awareness Week, which starts Monday and runs through Friday.

The normal posted speed limit on I-595 is 65 mph. But if workers are present and if lanes are closed, the 55 mph speed limit applies.

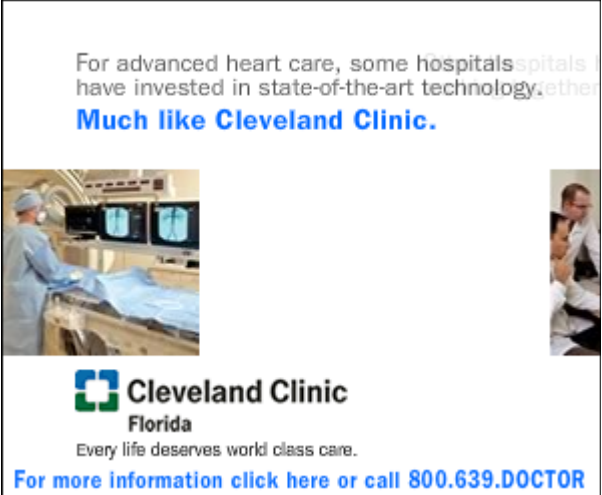
Fines automatically are doubled if you get pulled over for speeding. A driver ticketed for going 15 to 19 mph over the speed limit will get a \$405 fine. If caught going 20 to 29 mph over the speed limit, you'll face a fine of \$455.

"It's not just for the safety of the workers. It's for the drivers as well," said FHP Sgt. Mark Wysocky. "People need to slow down and pay attention."

In 2008, the most recent statistics available, 93 people were killed and 6,802 people were injured in 9,343 crashes that occurred in work zones in Florida, according to the Florida Department of Transportation.

Officials say the number of deaths has steadily declined since 2005 when 137 people died in Florida construction zones.

Narrow lanes, closed shoulders and unfamiliar traffic patterns are going to make I-595 tougher to drive



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in the coming weeks.

The state's contractor, I-595 Express, has just started construction on a \$1.8 billion project to revamp a 10-mile stretch of I-595 with reversible lanes, crisscrossing ramps and new outside lanes to ease merging between interchanges.

Only one stretch between Nob Hill Road and Davie Road is under construction so far. But by the end of the year, most of I-595 between I-75 and State Road 7 and the Florida's Turnpike approaches to I-595 will be a sea of workers, barricades and shifting lanes.

Crews currently are working in the grassy median near Pine Island Road to pave temporary lanes. Eastbound traffic will be shifted to the temporary lanes while construction and widening occurs in the outside eastbound lanes.

Some of the temporary lanes will be narrower – 11 feet on the inside and outside and 12 feet in the center.

Laila Haddad, a DOT spokeswoman for the I-595 project, said more troopers will be assigned to cover I-595 from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Sunday through Thursday. Those hours are when crews are allowed to close lanes for road work.

Flashing signs will warn drivers when the 55 mph speed limit is in effect.

"When [drivers] see the signs and see that they are flashing then drivers must slow down, just like a school zone," Haddad said.

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