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## AP New York

### Legislature approves work zone safety bill

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 Associated Press Writer

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ALBANY, N.Y. -- A little-noticed measure approved by the Legislature in Friday's flurry of bills passed on the last day of session is a matter of life and death.

The bill to crack down on traffic accidents in highway construction zones follows the death of three construction workers, killed last month in a chain-reaction crash at a work site on Interstate 81 outside Binghamton. Police believe speeding played a role.

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Under the Work Zone Safety Act, anyone convicted of two or more speeding violations in a work zone would face a 60-day license suspension. The bill, passed Thursday by the state Senate and Friday by the Assembly, also requires a police presence in major work zones and creates a public education program through a \$50 surcharge on all construction zone speeding violations.

State Sen. Thomas Libous, a Binghamton Republican, said the state Department of Transportation doesn't have enough funding to adequately spread the word about safety. The department spends \$165,000 a year statewide on public outreach programs and publicity for safety.

"That's less than what I spend in two months during a campaign, and that's just in Binghamton," said Libous, a sponsor of the bill.

Earlier this month, the Transportation Department started putting safety messages such as "Slow Down, My

Mommy Works Here" on 103 state trucks.

Electronic message signs alert drivers to work in progress and a state Web site advises travelers of construction sites. The state has also worked with police to increase traffic law enforcement in work zones.

Last year there were 467 accidents in DOT construction zones. One road worker and six motorists died, said department spokeswoman Jennifer Post.

In the last 10 years there have been 485 motorist "intrusions" into work zones, instances when vehicles drove into the closed portion of work zone. Last year there were 62 intrusions, and there were 24 by end of May this year, the first month of the construction season, Post said.

"We are alarmed at the rate of intrusions we've seen already in the construction season," Post said. "We want people to slow down and pay attention in work zones."

The number of persons killed in motor vehicle crashes nationwide in work zones rose from 872 in 1999 to 1,028 in 2003, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

On the Net:

New York Transportation Department: <http://www.dot.state.ny.us/>

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