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Close calls happen all too often in work zones

“You could feel the impact of the car hitting the barrier wall. They hit the wall within five feet of where we had been.”

That was part of the story told by Vincent Grier, a highway worker with the Kansas Department of Transportation, at a statewide safety event today in Topeka. Grier was recounting the time a motorist drove through a work zone on I-70, nearly hitting him and a co-worker.

“I heard screeching, and there was a car coming right at us in our cone-off lane,” Grier said. “The only place to go was either out into traffic or jump over the wall.”

Unfortunately, this was similar to other stories Grier shared about close calls in work zones. Grier was joined at the event by Kansas Transportation Secretary Mike King and Kansas Highway Patrol Superintendent Ernest Garcia.

The safety event was one of several activities taking place in Kansas as part of National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 23-27, which is an effort to raise awareness of the hazards and dangers highway workers face every day.

And the danger isn't just an issue for highway workers.

“Work zones can be very dangerous for highway workers, but statistics show that nearly 90 percent of the time, it's the motorists who are injured or killed,” said Secretary King.

Last year in Kansas work zones, 566 people were injured and 11 people were killed.

When traveling through a work zone, motorists should:

- ♦Follow traffic control
- ♦Stay alert
- ♦Watch for workers
- ♦Expect delays
- ♦Allow ample space between you and the car in front of you
- ♦Change lanes when directed to do so

More information on work zone safety can be found on KDOT's website, www.ksdot.org by clicking on the Go Orange logo.

The link includes safety blogs from KDOT employees and other transportation partners, numerous videos featuring upcoming construction throughout the state, a new public service announcement on work zone safety and photos of people wearing orange in support of highway workers and their efforts.

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