

NEWS RELEASE

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Motorists urged to slow down and practice attentive driving in highway work zones

Highway work zones are a common sight with the arrival of spring as roadways are being improved for motorists. Traveling safely through those work zones can save lives.

“Work zones crashes can happen quickly when motorists don’t slow down and pay attention,” said Deb Miller, KDOT Secretary of Transportation. “Motorists have complete control over these two factors. The added time that it takes to travel through a work zone is a small price to pay for enhanced safety.”

National Work Zone Safety Awareness will take place April 7-11. KDOT, in conjunction with the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation officials (AASHTO) and the United States Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are dedicated to enhancing work zone safety for both workers and the traveling public.

“The Kansas Highway Patrol is glad to partner with KDOT to enhance traffic safety and provide enforcement in targeted areas throughout the state,” said Patrol Superintendent Col. Terry Maple. “Kansas law allows for doubled fines in work zones to

help deter reckless driving in work zones. Unfortunately, some motorists who are inattentive or speed in Kansas work zones may end up in an injury or fatal crash.”

Since 1990, there have been 32,424 work zones crashes in Kansas that resulted in 257 fatalities and 13,885 injuries. Inattentive driving and speeding were the main causes of those crashes followed by failure to yield and following too closely.

KDOT has lost three highway workers since June 2005. Following the death of the last worker – Ty Korte on U.S. 59 south of Lawrence – a work group was appointed by the agency to comprehensively identify changes/additions to current work zones that could result in a higher degree of safety to both workers and motorists. The group is looking at changes that KDOT could make and considering whether stronger state laws are needed.

Work zone safety is just as important for motorists as it is for highway workers. Statistics annually show that motorists comprise four out of five of all deaths in highway work zones.

“Work zone safety is everyone’s job,” said Miller. “We want our highway workers and the traveling public to get home safely to their families.”

Motorists can make trips safer by remembering the following work zone safety tips.

- Do not speed in work zones; obey the posted speed limits.
- Stay Alert! Expect the unexpected.
- Watch for workers; drive with caution.
- Don't change lanes unnecessarily.
- Avoid using mobile phones while driving in work zones.
- Turn on headlights so that workers and other drivers can see you.
- Be especially alert at night while driving in work zones.
- Expect delays, especially during peak travel times.
- Allow ample space between you and the car in front of you.
- Anticipate lane shifts, and merge when directed to do so.

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