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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 9, 2018

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Crashes in highway work zones occur all too often

Topeka – Seven is not a lucky number for Kansas Turnpike Authority Maintenance Foreman Bruce Winkle. During his career, Winkle's vehicle has been struck seven times in work zone crashes.

"The first time I was struck was 30 years ago on Christmas Eve where a van driving in freezing fog hit the back of the dump truck I was on, causing a nine-car pileup with injuries," Winkle said.

Kansas Department of Transportation Supervisor Brian Link, who works in Johnson County, has seen numerous crashes in work zones.

"I personally have been struck two times on separate occasions while providing traffic control for maintenance operations ... and I have had too many close calls to even remember them all," Link said.

Winter operations can also be hazardous. Jeff Romine, KDOT Superintendent in Wamego, was plowing snow on K-99 when a car came up behind him going extremely fast and hit the back of his truck.

"The car spun around and then hit the side of the truck, and then just kept on going," Romine said.

Winkle, Link and Romine shared several incidents they have experienced while in highway work zones at the statewide work zone safety event in Topeka today. They were joined by State Transportation Engineer Catherine Patrick and KHP Superintendent Col. Mark Bruce.

The event is one of several activities in Kansas as part of National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 9-13, which raises awareness of the dangers highway workers and motorists face in work zones. **Last year in Kansas, there were 1, 779 work zone crashes - 491 people were injured and 12 people were killed.**

Highway workers and others are sharing work zone stories each day this week in a blog series at <http://kansastransportation.blogspot.com/>. Electronic message boards along the highways will also have rotating work zone safety messages.

Buildings and structures across Kansas will be lit up in orange all week to highlight work zone safety. Check out the Governor's Mansion, the Amelia Earhart Bridge in Atchison, the Visitor's Center in the Capitol, the Eisenhower State Office Building in Topeka, the front of the Topeka City Hall, the Travel Information Center on I-70 near Goodland and KDOT offices in Topeka, Salina, Norton, Chanute, Hutchinson and Garden City.

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