

NEWS RELEASE

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Too many close calls in highway work zones

Close calls happen all too often in highway work zones.

“A lady was coming through our work zone on I-70 and she was wiping out all our traffic cones,” said Tony Trower, Highway Maintenance Supervisor in Topeka. “When I got her stopped, she was just 10 feet away from going around the equipment where our employees were working.”

Trower has seen his share of inattentive drivers in work zones during his 20 years at the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT).

“I pulled eight or nine cones out that were stuck under her van – she had no idea she had even hit the cones,” Trower said. “She started crying when she saw the cones and the signs because then she understood what she had done and what she was about to do to the highway workers in front of the truck.”

The need for safety in work zones was stressed by Trower as well as KDOT Secretary Deb Miller, Kansas Highway Patrol Superintendent Terry Maple and KDOT Highway Maintenance Supervisor (Olathe) Brian Hoke at the National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week event in Topeka today.

Educating the public on the hazards of work zones and how to increase safety for highway workers and the traveling public is the goal of National Work Zone Awareness

Week (April 19-23). In Kansas, five people were killed and 490 people were injured in work zone crashes last year.

Inattention, following too closely, not yielding, fatigue and driving too fast – all driver-related - are the top contributing circumstances of crashes in work zones. More than 85 percent of all the people killed in work zone crashes are motorists.

“It can be pretty scary out there,” Trower said. “People need to be aware of their surroundings in work zones and be alert. We’re out there trying to make the roads safe for them, but they’re not always making it safe for us.”

Several tips to keep in mind when driving in work zones include:

- Pay attention to the signs and obey road crew flaggers
- Don’t tailgate and don’t speed
- Expect the unexpected
- Stay alert
- Be patient

To view a public service announcement on work zone safety, which was created by KDOT, go to www.youtube.com/user/kansastransportation

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