



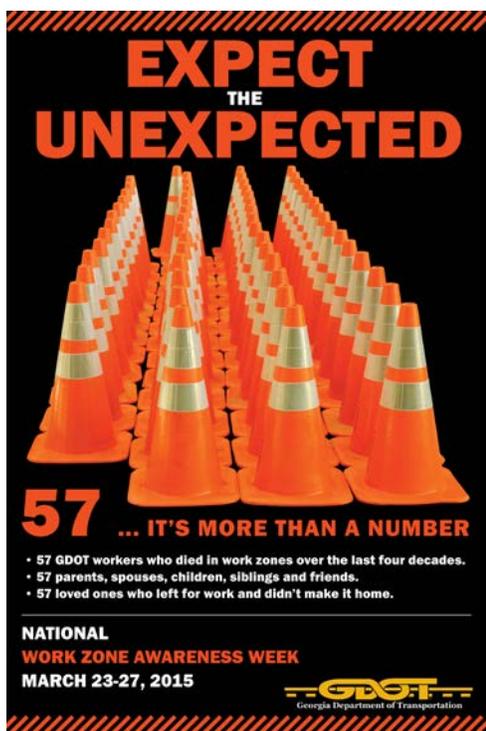
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Southwest Georgia...

Tifton Display to Mark Work Zone Awareness Week March 23-27

TIFTON, Ga. – The Georgia Department of Transportation’s southwest district will observe Work Zone Awareness Week March 23-27 with a display outside the Tifton office that will include 57 cones, one for each GDOT employee who has died in work zone accidents since 1973.



“We want the public to recognize that these cones represent our employees who had to work on the roadways. They were out there to make the roads safer for the public. Please slow down and pay attention,” District Safety Officer Brian Fincher said.

Work Zone Awareness Week is a national observance that began in 1999. This year’s theme is “Expect the Unexpected,” a reminder that drivers should be prepared for changes in work zones. Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be closed, narrowed or shifted and people may be working on or near the road. Today is the first day of spring, which means GDOT crews will soon be mowing state rights-of-way and road construction will be picking up.

“As we approach the busier construction seasons of spring and summer and traffic increases on our roadways, please be aware of your surroundings,” District Engineer Chad Hartley said.

This year’s Work Zone Awareness Week observance is particularly timely. On March 4 a DOT sign shop crew from Tifton was installing new raised pavement markers on U.S. 84 in Lowndes County when a tractor trailer struck the rear buffer truck. The collision caused a chain-reaction crash that damaged several other Department vehicles. The four employees and the driver of the tractor trailer were not seriously injured.

GDOT veteran Darrell Braswell was the highway maintenance foreman on that crew and the crash was not his first close call on the road.

Braswell recalled working on a crew that was installing thermoplastic striping on a divided highway. He was in a truck hauling a trailer that held large pots containing material heated to 430-440 degrees. A tractor trailer moved into the adjacent lane, but a driver trying to get around the semi rear-ended the DOT trailer.

“The driver hit the trailer and knocked us about 75 feet,” Braswell said. He came out of that collision with shaken nerves and sore muscles.

Many DOT employees can recall near-misses while working on or near the roadways. Most do not make the news because they do not involve property damage or bodily injury, but they happen with alarming frequency.

PRESS RELEASE

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“For people traveling in cars, we’re an annoyance to them, we’re an inconvenience. They’ve only got one thing on their minds and that’s to get to where they want to go. It’s frustrating because we come to work every day to work for them to try and make the roads safer,” Braswell said.

In 2013 (the most recent available national data) there were 579 work zone traffic-related fatalities, 29,000 work zone injuries and 105 worker fatalities, according to the Federal Highway Administration. Work zone accidents can be just as deadly for the traveling public. In 2013 two out of three victims in work zone crashes were drivers and their passengers, the FHWA said. The most common contributing factors in work zone accidents are speed and distracted driving.

Braswell said workers just want drivers to slow down, pay attention to the traffic control in place and move over when they approach a road crew.

“We have a family we need to go home to. We just want to be able to perform our duties that DOT has assigned us to do,” he said.

Work Zone Safety Tips:

- Don’t speed. Obey the posted speed limit even when workers are not present.
- Don’t tailgate other motorists or construction vehicles. The main type of work zone crash is a rear-end collision.
- Keep up with the traffic flow.
- Read all signs. They are there to help drivers move safely through the work zone.
- Obey road crew flaggers. These workers are equivalent to traffic signals.
- Stay alert. Minimize distractions such as cell phones and other electronic devices.
- Wear your seatbelt. It’s your best defense in a crash.

For more information, please visit <http://www.dot.ga.gov/DS/SafetyOperation/Workzone>.

Each day, hundreds of Georgia Department of Transportation employees and contractors work on dozens of highway, bridge and intersection improvements throughout the state. Their work often brings them and heavy machinery in close proximity to travel lanes. Fifty-seven Georgia DOT personnel and many more motorists, passengers and contractors’ workers have been killed in highway work zone accidents since 1973. Please help us prevent these tragedies by slowing down; being especially attentive and cautious as you pass through construction work zones; and always driving responsibly. Safer Driving; Safer Work Zones; For Everyone. For more information on Georgia DOT, please visit www.dot.ga.gov or subscribe to our Press Release [RSS feed](#). You also may follow us on [Facebook](#) (www.facebook.com/GeorgiaDOT) and [Twitter](#) (<http://twitter.com/gadepoftrans>).

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