



For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, March 24, 2015

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GDOT reminds drivers to...

Expect the Unexpected in Work Zones

ATLANTA –Today, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) officials, along with key federal and state partners, memorialized 57 Georgia DOT employees who died in work zone incidents throughout the state since 1973.

The event took place in an active work zone on the Northwest Corridor as part of the National Work Zone Awareness Week (NWZAW) campaign that began on March 23 and ends on March 27. The 2015 theme is *Expect the Unexpected* which emphasizes the need for drivers to use extra caution in work zones - to pay attention, slow down and drive responsibly for the safety of workers, as well as for themselves. In fact, most victims in work zone crashes are civilians.



GDOT Commissioner Russell McMurry emphasized that while most drivers work in offices with walls and windows, many Georgia DOT employees work amid a busy highway or in other active locations potentially in harm's way.

“A stretch of pavement. A ditch. A sinkhole. An area along our right-of-way.” McMurry said. “For our Highway Emergency Response Operators (HEROs), their office is often the side of a highway, assisting stranded motorists, or in traffic control following an incident, with cars whizzing by and no buffer – just the Move-Over Law to protect them.”

In the past 41 years, 57 Georgia DOT employees have died in work zone incidents. In 2014, GDOT had no employee work zone fatalities; however there were 20 total work zone fatalities, including a GDOT contractor. In 2011, a Highway Emergency Response Operator, died while assisting a stranded motorist.

Statewide work zone motor vehicle fatality totals in previous years are: 17 in 2013; 31 in 2012; and 21 in 2011.

“While we are pleased that we have not lost a GDOT employee in a work zone related crash this past year, the loss of 20 lives is 20 too many,” Commissioner McMurry said. “I implore the public to be mindful of our workers and to pay strict attention when driving, not just today, but every day, especially in work zones.”

An incident in early March demonstrates the dangers GDOT workers face. A Georgia DOT sign shop crew was placing raised pavement markers along Highway 84 in Lowndes County when the buffer vehicle following behind them was struck by a tractor-trailer, resulting in a chain reaction crash.

When going through work zones, drivers should expect the unexpected; don't speed; don't tailgate; obey road crew flaggers; pay attention to signs; stay alert; and minimize distractions.

Safety is Georgia DOT's top priority. Each year, at the start of the spring construction season, GDOT districts statewide and their counterparts across the country, observe National Work Zone Awareness Week to bring attention to worker and motorist safety and mobility issues in work zones.

For more information about work zone safety, visit: www.dot.ga.gov/DS/SafetyOperation/Workzone.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is committed to providing a safe, seamless and sustainable transportation system that supports Georgia's economy and is sensitive to both its citizens and its environment. 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/GDOTEastTraffic) (<http://twitter.com/GDOTEastTraffic>).

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