

PRESS RELEASE



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Apr 11-15 is National Work Zone Awareness Week

Obey the Rules in Work Zones: Pay Attention. Slow Down. Watch for Workers.

ATLANTA – All work zones have rules. And Georgia Department of Transportation (Georgia DOT) reminds motorists that following the rules for driving in work zones can make the difference between life and death - not only for our workers, but also for drivers. Today Georgia Department of Transportation officials, along with key state and federal safety partners, paid tribute to the 58 Georgia DOT employees who died in work zone incidents since record-keeping began in 1973. Their primary message focused on the rules for driving in work zones - Pay Attention – Slow Down – Watch for Workers.

This year’s observance, appropriately held at HERO headquarters, was especially solemn. Just last month, Highway Emergency Response Operator - HERO - Moses King died from injuries he sustained in August 2015 as he was setting out road flares on Atlanta’s Downtown Connector. In 2011, Spencer Pass became Georgia DOT’s first HERO fatality when he too was struck on the roadway. King and Pass lost their lives while working to protect the lives of others.

“And it’s not just HEROs who are in jeopardy. It’s also our maintenance and road construction crews out in front with only a cone or a barrel as a buffer,” said Georgia DOT Commissioner Russell McMurry. “Every driver needs to be aware that when you see a GDOT worker or emergency medical personnel, law enforcement, firefighters, as well as tow truck drivers, they should slow down or move over one lane.”

Last year, several GDOT workers were injured in work zone incidents, including a sign crew of three injured in a chain-reaction crash when a tractor-trailer struck a buffer vehicle as they put down reflective pavement markers in southwest Georgia. Four HEROs were also struck and injured in separate incidents. And this past January, a dashboard camera video from a sheriff deputy’s vehicle highlighted the dangers of road work when GDOT Assistant Area Maintenance Engineer Roger Minschew narrowly missed being hit by a semi on I-75 in southwest Georgia.

For most Georgians the workday is an ordinary day, and they go about their work without concern for their safety.

“After all, many are surrounded by four walls – safe from harm’s way, But that’s not so for our crews working on the roadways. Their office is lane one on the interstate or behind a disabled vehicle in the center

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lane during rush hour,” McMurry said. “They all serve the public; they are all vulnerable and they all deserve to be safe. For this to happen, we need the public’s help.”

While Georgia DOT’s work zone awareness observance focused on the perils of work zones for workers, most victims in work zone crashes are in fact drivers or their passengers. In 2015, there were 27 work zone fatalities in Georgia – all members of the public. Nationally in 2014, based on the latest available data, 82 percent of work zone fatalities were drivers or their passengers.

GDOT offers a few important reminders:

- Work zones are not always stationary. Moving work zones that conduct maintenance activities like litter pickup, mowing, pavement marking and sweeping may move slowly and stop intermittently.
- Whenever you drive, Georgia DOT asks that you always **DriveAlert ArriveAlive**. That means buckle up; stay off the phone and no texting; and drive alert.
- Get to know Georgia’s Move-Over Law. It says drivers must move-over one lane or slow down and be prepared to stop when approaching a stationary law enforcement, emergency vehicle or construction crew displaying flashing yellow, amber, white, red or blue emergency lights. Learn more at <http://www.gahighwaysafety.org/highway-safety/move-over-law/>.

And in work zones, follow the work zone rules: Pay Attention – Slow Down – Watch for Workers. Also expect the unexpected; don’t speed or tailgate; and obey flaggers and pay attention to signs.

To view and share GDOT’s 30 second work zone safety video and for additional information, visit www.dot.ga.gov/DS/SafetyOperation/Workzone.

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

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