



For Immediate Release:

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Work Zone Crash Injures GDOT Worker

Georgia DOT Implores Motorists to Pay Strict Attention

GEORGIA— In less than a week, two work zone crashes have killed a driver, seriously injured a Georgia DOT worker and proved to be traumatic near misses for other employees.

On Monday, May 9, Assistant Highway Maintenance Foreman Curtis Lewis was critically injured in a work zone on SR 113 in Polk County. Lewis and co-worker Michael Allan Hatch were outside their truck as they patched the road. A vehicle rear-ended the DOT truck causing the truck to strike Lewis, who was airlifted to Grady Hospital and is listed in stable condition.

In a separate incident, on Friday, May 6 a motorist was killed, and Highway Emergency Response Operator (HERO) Operator 1 Miguel Jaime was uninjured in a work zone on I-285 at Old National Road in south Fulton County. While the HERO assisted a stranded motorist on the shoulder of the road, another vehicle entered the work zone and struck the back of the HERO truck. Jaime, who was not in his truck, was not hurt. Unfortunately, the driver of the vehicle that struck the HERO truck died in transit to the hospital.

“Our workers must be allowed to go home to their families at the end of the day,” Georgia DOT Commissioner Russell R. McMurry said, as he reflected on the increase in employee injuries over the last year. “We cannot overemphasize the need for motorists to pay attention when driving in general – and especially in our work zones. We must keep our employees safe.”

In April, Georgia Department of Transportation observed National Work Zone Awareness Week to call attention to the dangers of work zones for workers and the public.

In March, 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. In fact, 58 Georgia DOT employees have died in work zone incidents since record-keeping began in 1973.

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 Minshew narrowly missed being hit by a semi on I-75 in southwest Georgia.

While work zones are dangerous 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.

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“We are committed to keeping our employees safe, and we need that same commitment from the public. Please pay attention, slow down, watch for workers, and expect the unexpected in work zones,” McMurry said. “Always buckle up, stay off the phone – no texting – and drive alert.”

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

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