



DELAWARE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PRESS RELEASE

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“Work Zone Safety, Respect the Orange and Black”

National Work Zone Awareness Week is March 23-27

SMYRNA – During a press conference held today at 9:30 a.m., at the Smyrna Rest Area, in observance of National Work Zone Awareness Week, Department of Transportation Secretary (DelDOT) Jennifer Cohan and others educated attendees on the importance of observing extra caution while traveling through work zones. National Work Zone Awareness Week is held late March or early April each year at the traditional start of construction season, when the number of workers on our nation’s roadways increases. The theme of this year’s Delaware awareness campaign is “Work Zones, Respect the Orange and Black.”

Proclaiming the week of March 23, 2015, in Delaware to be National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week, Governor Markell encourages all citizens to be aware of the importance of safe driving habits in highway work zones. “As warm weather arrives, work zones become increasingly familiar sights along Delaware roads,” Governor Markell said. “But we should not let familiarity become complacency. Even though many of us will be driving through work zones every day, we should continue to keep our eyes wide open and obey the posted rules of the road. Lives depend upon it.”

“As visitors to Delaware and state residents alike should recognize, a work zone is the Delaware Department of Transportation doing its job. A work zone is not an inconvenience. It’s not a hassle,” explained Transportation Secretary Jennifer Cohan. “A work zone is state and federal funds at work repairing roads, performing maintenance, reconfiguring roads for safety, and striving to improve the state’s transportation network in general. A work zone is moms and dads and sons and daughters putting their lives on the line to serve the public interest.”

Recognizing the importance of traffic safety education, AAA Mid-Atlantic is again partnering with DelDOT to co-sponsor this year's campaign. Through their endorsement, DelDOT has been able to secure the services of Philadelphia Flyers Hockey Center, Claude Giroux, who will serve as this year's Work Zone Safety spokesperson for the Delaware campaign. "The men and women working in road construction zones are making travel smoother and safer for drivers and everyone who uses Delaware roadways," says Jim Lardear, Director of Public and Government Affairs at AAA Mid-Atlantic. "By slowing down, observing posted advisories and watching for changing driving conditions, motorists can keep themselves, their passengers and roadway construction safe in work zones."

Although highway workers are often among the victims of such crashes, it's important for drivers to understand that four out of five victims of work zone crashes are actually drivers or their passengers. Generally, crashes occur when drivers speed through a work zone or do not pay attention to the changing road conditions and run into other vehicles, highway equipment or safety barriers, or drive off the roadway completely. In a typical five-day work week, an average of seven motorists and one worker are killed nationwide. The primary causes of work zone crashes are following too closely and inattentive driving.

Emphasizing the importance of maintaining a safe distance between vehicles within work zones Delaware State Police PIO Sgt. Richard Bratz told the assemblage: "When traveling through a highway work zone, drivers must pay extra attention to changing traffic patterns, look for slow moving equipment and be able to react on a moment's notice to stopped or slowing traffic. Rear-end crashes accounted for 43 percent of all work zone crashes in Delaware in 2014. Most rear-end crashes occur when following too closely. This is why speeding through work zones is not tolerated in Delaware. Any traffic infractions within this zone such as speeding, unsafe lane changes, disregarding traffic control devices or reckless driving are subject to fines that are doubled in cost."

New Castle County Emergency Medical Services Public Information Officer Corporal Abigail Haas expounded on Officer Bratz's comments. "There is a reason why the speed limit is dropped markedly in a work zone. A subject struck by a vehicle traveling at 20 m.p.h. has a 5 percent chance of dying of their injuries. If the vehicle is traveling at 30 m.p.h., the fatality rate jumps to approximately 40 percent, and then to 80 percent when a vehicle is traveling at 40 m.p.h. Nearly 100 percent of patients will die if they are struck by a vehicle traveling at speeds greater than 50 m.p.h. It is so important to slow down and pay attention in these areas. From an E.M.S. perspective we are racing against the clock once someone sustains traumatic injuries. The best treatment for trauma is prevention."

"Workers put themselves in harm's way to help the rest of us by building and maintaining the roads and bridges that get us where we need to go as safely as possible," said Adam Weiser, DelDOT's Manager of Traffic Safety. "When it comes to keeping highway workers and drivers safe, we're all in this together. While DelDOT requires its employees to get regular work zone safety training, our workers want to remind drivers of potential upcoming hazards within work zones. We ask motorists to slow down when they approach and travel through a work zone and pay close attention to the signing and channelization devices. Help keep us safe, to keep you safe."

The National Work Zone Awareness Week began in 1999, when the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) signed a Memorandum of Agreement pledging to increase public awareness of work zone safety issues through a national media campaign. Since then, awareness has continued to grow, with state agencies and other organizations sponsoring high-visibility education and outreach initiatives.

Some simple tips for improving work zone safety include:

- * When you see the "orange and black," be extra cautious.
- * Warning signs will let you know what to expect.
- * Barrels or cones will delineate your path of travel.
- * Flag persons will help direct you along the way.
- * Avoid distractions.
- * Don't tailgate.
- * Don't change lanes.
- * Slow down and expect the unexpected.

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