



## CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **CONNECTICUT KICKS OFF WORK ZONE SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK**

Governor M. Jodi Rell and Lieutenant Governor Michael Fedele today joined the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) and other transportation organizations across the country to promote Work Zone Safety Awareness Week, April 2-6, 2007.

“We have two key messages this year: ‘Don’t Zone Out in Work Zones’ and ‘Pay Attention or Pay Double,’” Governor Rell said at the DOT rest stop on I-84 in Southington where Work Zone Safety Awareness Week was being promoted. “Motorists must expect the unexpected on our highways. Work zones are places where people need to pay attention.”

A law passed in 1995 doubles the fines for traffic violations in highway construction and utility work zones.

A Work Zone Safety Awareness Week proclamation issued by Governor Rell states that the campaign “promotes partnerships with the federal, state and local governments, businesses and communities to support activities that raise public consciousness about the need for driving safely in work zones.” The proclamation also commends the DOT for using “effective work zone strategies to address the safety and mobility needs of road users, workers and others, while reducing congestion and crashes in and around work zones.”

DOT Commissioner Ralph J. Carpenter noted that number of accidents in work zones in Connecticut dropped in 2005 (the most recent year for complete data) to 955 from 1,314 in 2004. Of the accidents in 2005, 249 involved injuries and one DOT worker was killed.

“With nearly a 40 percent increase in work zone fatalities between 1997 and 2005 nationally, work zone safety is a growing roadway safety concern,” Commissioner Carpenter said. “Across the country in 2005, there were 1,074 work zone fatalities. That represents 2.5 percent of all roadway fatalities for the year. More than four out of every five work zone fatalities were motorists.”

He also noted that the national roadway system's positive trends leveled off at a 2005 fatality rate of approximately 1.46 deaths per 100 million miles of travel, down from 5.50 fatalities in 1966.

“These deaths represent all the workers who risk their very lives every day in order to improve our roadways,” Commissioner Carpenter said, also noting that “motorists are more likely to be seriously injured or killed than road workers.”

Also joining the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Commissioner Carpenter were Commissioner John Danaher, Department of Public Safety; Deputy Commissioner John Herman, Department of Motor Vehicles; Assistant Division Administrator John Formosa, Federal Highway Administration; Chief Murray Pendleton of Waterford, representing the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association; and Don Shubert, Connecticut Construction Industries Association.

A number of campaign partners were also present at the event to show their support for the work zone safety programs and initiatives. They included utility companies, industry members, local and regional safety organizations, state employee unions and transportation safety companies. Also in attendance were representatives from some of the state’s major attractions and destinations. Selected state attractions and major events will post “Don’t Zone Out” signs on-site and/or provide work zone safety information on their websites as part of the program. The growing list of participating attractions and events include major state beaches and campgrounds (Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford, Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme, Hammonasset State Park in Madison, Silver Sands State Park in Milford, Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, Black Rock State Park in Thomaston), Dinosaur State Park in Rocky Hill, Nutmeg State Games in Bridgeport, New Britain Rock Cats in New Britain, Mystic Seaport in Mystic and the Travelers Championship (PGA Tour) in Cromwell. Additional sites and events will be announced.

In 2005, a member of the Department of Transportation was killed in a work zone accident. Robert Mugford, a DOT Maintainer, was struck and killed while placing traffic cones along a work zone on Route 7 in Norwalk. Ten years prior to that in August 1995, was the death of Darlene Falconeri who was also struck and killed by a motor vehicle. 2005 was also a difficult year for the construction industry, where an employee working for a contractor was killed on I-95 when a vehicle entered the work zone and struck him.

This year’s national theme of “**Signs of Change**” refers to the roadway advisory signs that warn motorists of several conditions found in roadway work zones, and conveys the message that variance from the routine is, in itself, a potential hazard motorists should recognize and anticipate. Along with Connecticut’s campaign theme, “**Don’t Zone Out – Pay Attention or Pay Double**” the Department of Transportation and its campaign partners hope to further reduce the number of fatalities, injuries and crashes as more drivers and roadway workers are better educated and informed of the hazards in work zones.

To help motorists navigate safely through work sites, the Connecticut Department of Transportation offers the following tips:

- Expect the unexpected!
- Slow down!
- Don’t tailgate!
- Pay attention!
- Obey traffic persons!
- Stay alert!
- Be patient and stay calm!
- Remember -- the work zone crewmembers are working to improve your future ride!