

Call to Slow Down in Work Zones



By Nora Muchanic

April 8, 2007 - Now that Spring is here, we're going to be seeing a lot more road construction crews and officials are urging people to slow down in those work zones.

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Donning a reflective vest and wearing his old ID card, Gina Dudek of Beverly is remembering her husband, Dirk. He was a maintenance supervisor for the New Jersey Turnpike killed last year when a tractor trailer plowed into his truck while he was on the job.

Dudek's death was remembered at a conference conducted by the New Jersey Work Zone Safety Partnership, a group dedicated to making conditions safer for people who work and drive on the highways.

"They need to slow down because those workers are actually someone's loved one," said Dudek.

Also honored posthumously was Woody Pinkerton of Medford, a veteran fire police captain who died after being hit while directing traffic at an accident scene in 2003.

"He said he tried to dive over the car when he saw it coming that close, and he was unsuccessful," said Capt. Chris Cannatella.

Despite the presence of signs, cones, barriers and other signals the partnership says over a thousand workers in this country die each year in work zone accidents. Tens of thousands are injured because of careless drivers.

"They're in a hurry to go to the next location. They forget they're driving near other people," said Dr. Claudia Knezek of the Work Zone Safety Partnership.

"The sad thing is the workers out there are paying the price with their lives," said Lt. Brian Crain of New Jersey State Police.

State Trooper Sergeant Williams McCabe suffered injuries when he was hit from behind last month.

"My car went approximately 400 yards from the impact and I don't remember how I got there," said McCabe.

Safety experts say there are simple and obvious ways for the motoring public to play it safe when approaching a construction or emergency zone.

"Follow the signs, follow the safety pattern and slow down," said Crain.

Officials are looking at automated enforcement in work zones like the red light cameras that have been so successful in Philadelphia.

For those who speed through work zones now fines are doubled if you're caught.

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