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## TUCSON REGION

### Road work- zone deaths remembered

By Andrea Kelly

arizona daily star

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A national traveling memorial is visiting Tucson this week to honor those who have died in roadway work zones.

But more than 80 percent of these deaths are not among the transportation workers themselves. Most of the construction-zone deaths are of drivers or passengers in cars going through the zones.

The Arizona Department of Transportation requested that the memorial stop in Tucson, and it will be on display today and Thursday at the City and County Public Works Building, 201 N. Stone Ave., from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The memorial wall displays the names of more than 1,000 people who have died in work zones.

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At a ceremony on Tuesday, 112 orange cones were set up to honor the Arizonans who have lost their lives in work zones in the last five years. Each cone had a black ribbon tied around its top.

The memorial visit comes week before National Work Zone Awareness Week, which is devoted to sending a public-service message to slow down, pay attention and be extra cautious in highway

construction zones.

ADOT Director Victor Mendez stressed how much each death affects the department.

"We have to be very careful. We have to be alert and aware when we are traveling through the work zones," he said.

Other speakers talked about specific deaths they remembered and the circumstances surrounding them.

Projects provided by the voter-approved Regional Transportation Plan are under way in the Tucson metropolitan area, along with the preliminary work in the Interstate 10 widening project.

"Every single one of those puts workers in harm's way," Tucson Mayor Bob Walkup said.

The jurisdictions are doing the right thing by using signs to alert drivers when they are entering a construction zone, and also by levying higher fines for speeding in construction areas, he said.

The No. 1 driver distraction is cell-phone use, according to Nathan Banks, senior engineering manager for the Federal Highway Administration's Arizona Division.

"You cannot use one of these and operate a vehicle safely," he said, holding up a cell phone.

• Contact reporter Andrea Kelly at 573-4243 or akelly@azstarnet.com.

#### Did you Know ...

- About 4,500 people have died in work zones in the last five years.
- Eighty-five percent of them were adults driving, not workers in the zones.
- Most crashes in construction zones occur during the summer and fall.
- It takes a fully loaded large truck about 50 percent more time to stop compared with one not hauling cargo.

Source: Nathan Banks, Federal Highway Administration

#### Tips for driving safely in a work zone:

- Keep your lights on.
- Don't tailgate.
- Be patient.
- Don't speed.
- Don't change lanes in the work zone.

Source: Arizona Department of Transportation

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