

Slow Down or Pay Up: States Increase Enforcement in Roadway Work Zones; Maryland Hosts National Work Zone Safety Week Press Conference

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WASHINGTON, April 4 /PRNewswire/ -- To curb the speeding that turns hundreds of roadway work zones into crash sites each year, Federal and State officials and construction-industry groups announced stepped-up enforcement of posted speed limits in work zones. Each year, more than 1,000 people are killed across the country in work zone crashes, and another 40,000 are injured. Four out of five people killed in work zones are drivers and passengers.

"These tragedies do not need to happen, they can be prevented," said Louise Bowles, widow of David Alan Bowles, who was tragically killed in a Maryland work zone last year. "Working in the elements, highway workers have a tough job without motorists speeding through their work areas."

Working in partnership to prevent future tragedies, US Reps. James Oberstar (D-MN), Thomas Petri (R-WI), Albert R. Wynn (D-MD) and Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael Steele will join representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, state and other traffic safety expert in an event that will be held Tuesday, April 5 in Maryland at the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project, the third largest construction project in the country. The event will kick off National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week (April 3-9).

Maryland State Police and other officials will demonstrate speed-control techniques at the event site. In support of highway safety efforts, Maryland Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. declared April Work Zone Safety Awareness Month.

"Safety on Maryland roads is our number one priority," said Governor Ehrlich. "In 2003 alone, 13 people died in work zone crashes in Maryland. Deaths like these are preventable. When traveling through a work zone, remember to slow down, pay attention, and remember 90 percent of all crashes are preventable."

"Work zones are simply more hazardous than roads without construction, and that's why lower speed limits are posted -- to buy you time to avoid becoming a statistic," said Jack Lettiere, President of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

"The number of men, women and children killed every year in roadway work zones continues to be an alarming statistic," said Thomas McSwain, President of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA). "I am grateful to members of law enforcement and those in the roadway safety industry who have partnered to help raise awareness of this issue."

This year, in conjunction with National Work Zone Awareness Week, and the start of the construction season, many states are boosting speed enforcement in work zones to discourage scofflaw driving. Several states will warn drivers of work-zone speed enforcement with public service announcements advising motorists in work zones to "Slow Down, or Pay Up."

"Imagine if your work desk was four feet from vehicles moving 65 mph or more. My employees face these conditions every day," American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) Chairman Rich Wagman said. His company, G.A. & F.C. Wagman, Inc., is working on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project. "ARTBA is committed to working with law enforcement to ensure that construction zones are safer for motorists and workers."

The national event is co-sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration, AASHTO, and the ATSSA, and the transportation departments of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The observance is also sponsored by the ARTBA and the Associated General Contractors (AGC).

Source: Maryland State Highway Administration