



news

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND AMERICAN
TRAFFIC SAFETY SERVICES ASSOCIATION PARTNER TO PROMOTE
WORK ZONE SAFETY AND REDUCE THE NUMBER OF WORK ZONE
RELATED FATALITIES IN TEXAS**

**“A mock work zone graveyard symbolizing the 155-work zone related deaths in 2000
will be staged at the news conference”**

(Houston, Texas) ----- On Friday, April 5, 2002 at 10:00 a.m., Gary K. Trietsch, Texas Department of Transportation-Houston District Engineer, Texas State Senator John Whitmire, Houston City Council Member Carroll Robinson, Harris County Sheriff's Department Major George Sturgis, METRO Police Chief Tom Lambert, Texas Department of Public Safety Captain Jude Schexnyder and Dan Batterson, Texas Chapter President of the American Traffic Safety Services Association will hold a news conference in observance of 'National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week' at Houston TranStar located at 6922 Old Katy Road.

Recognized April 8-12, 'Work Zone Safety Awareness Week' is part of a national campaign to help increase public awareness of work zone safety and reduce the number of fatalities on area freeways. According to the National Work Zone Safety Council and the United States Department of Transportation, in Texas 85 percent of all work zone related fatalities claim the lives of motorists and approximately 14,700 work zone related injuries are sustained every year.

The most common cause for these work zone related fatalities is speeding, driver inattention and failure to yield right of way. Rear-end incidents are the most common type of crashes in work zones.

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Motorist are not aware that a vehicle traveling at 55 mph while passing a “Road Work 1500 Feet” warning sign will be in that work zone within 17 seconds. Incidentally, most work zone related crashes and fatalities occur during the fall and summer.

State transportation officials are partnering with researchers to develop new devices and methods that will improve safety and reduce work zone-related fatalities in Texas. In fact, the Texas Department of Transportation currently is funding nearly \$1 million for work zone research projects.

The Texas Department of Transportation is also collaborating on other work zone safety research projects, including enhanced work zone traffic management methods, traffic control improvements for complex work zones, lighting standards for electronic sign equipment, and design specifications for crashworthy work zone traffic control devices.

Reducing injuries and fatalities in roadway construction and maintenance work zones remains a top priority for TxDOT and better public awareness results in a reduction in the number of work zone related fatalities.

Currently, researchers are testing an advance warning system with flashing lights that will alert motorists further upstream of approaching lane closures ahead to encourage earlier lane merging. The system, tested in daytime and nighttime field studies, helps draw attention to lane closures and indicates the direction vehicles should move earlier than current systems.

For more information on the advanced warning system, please contact Mark Cross with the Texas Department of Transportation-Austin at 512-475-0942. For more information on ‘Work Zone Safety Awareness Week’, please contact James Johnson with the Texas Department of Transportation-Houston District at 713-802-5073.