



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

For Immediate Release

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WIDOW WARNS OF WORK ZONE DANGERS

[COLUMBUS] – Sandra Cappel knows from experience how dangerous highway work can be. Last year, her husband – the father of two college-age sons – was killed while inspecting a highway work zone in Tuscarawas County. Allen Cappel, a 24-year veteran of the Ohio Department of Transportation was only 42.

“Had the driver had his mind on the road and his truck between the lines, my husband would still be alive,” said Cappel. “Motorists need to slow down and pay attention in work zones so that more boys don’t have to go through life without their daddy.”

Sunday kicks off National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week, which runs April 4-10. Events are scheduled across the country to raise awareness for work zone dangers and encourage drivers to do more for safety. This year, motorists will encounter more than 700 ODOT work zones statewide.

In 2003, there were 7,265 work zone crashes in Ohio: 1,055 people were injured and 16 people died. Despite the safety warnings, the number of crashes increased by 11 percent from 2002 (6,500 crashes).

While construction and maintenance workers are at obvious risk, motorists and passengers are four times more likely to be injured or killed.

“Our employees and contractors risk their lives every day to repair and rebuild our roads and highways,” said Jack Marchbanks, District 6 Deputy Director. “But if you don’t care about them, think of yourself. It only takes a split-second of bad judgement to end a life.”

ODOT says the most common causes of crashes are following too close, failure to yield and speeding. Many work zone crashes occur at interchanges where motorists are merging onto the highway.

Marchbanks said ODOT does what it can to reduce accidents by reducing work zone congestion. The department spends about \$30 million annually to maintain more lanes of traffic, speed the pace of construction and conduct more work on weekends and nights when fewer people are on the road.

In addition, ODOT employs full-time work zone managers to design and monitor work zones and is testing new materials to make signs, pavement markings and other warning devices more visible at night or in wet conditions. This year, the department will also test the use of speed trailers in work zones to get motorists’ attention.

Motorists can help ODOT keep highways safe by using good judgement and common sense in work zones:

- Stay alert and give driving your full attention.
- Follow all posted signs and obey flaggers.
- **Don’t tailgate; Most crashes in work zones are rear-end collisions.**
- Merge early and be courteous to other drivers.
- Don’t speed. It takes less than a minute more to travel a two-mile work zone at 45 mph than 65 mph.

For information on statewide work zones, log onto www.buckeyetraffic.org

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