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Move Over for Work Zones - It's the Law

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*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Missouri - Every spring, the Missouri Department of Transportation starts preparing for the summer season of roadwork across the state. Part of that preparation includes the observance of National Work Zone Awareness Week, which kicked-off today.

Highway workers spend their days working a short distance from fast-moving vehicles. They make every effort to work safely, but they count on motorists to pay attention, slow down, and use caution when driving through work zones.

In 2012, Governor Jay Nixon and the Missouri General Assembly added MoDOT vehicles to the "Move Over" law, which protects law enforcement and emergency response vehicles parked on the side of the road. This law requires motorists to slow down or change lanes when approaching these vehicles and now includes MoDOT vehicles parked with amber and white lights flashing.

"The law is simple: If you see flashing lights on the side of the road, move over to give workers and emergency personnel plenty of room to stay safe," said MoDOT Chief Engineer Ed Hassinger. "If you can't move over on a crowded highway, you should slow down as you pass them. We want you and our workers to make it home safe every day."

The severe downturn in transportation funding in Missouri means that MoDOT's focus is

increasingly on preservation of the existing transportation system. It requires \$485 million per year to keep Missouri's roads and bridges in the condition they are in today. MoDOT's construction budget is slightly above that figure now, but by 2017 it will fall to \$325 million. That will lead to the eventual deterioration of highways across the state. Lots of resurfacing and bridge replacement projects will be required and that is the type of work that affects drivers the most.

Work zones come in many forms such as a lane closures that last for weeks or even months for roadway or bridge construction, or work zones that last a few hours or just one day for road maintenance.

"Not all work zones look alike," said MoDOT State Maintenance Engineer Beth Wright. "We remind motorists that work zones can be moving operations, such as striping, patching or mowing. They can also be short term, temporary lane closures to make quick repairs or remove debris from the roadway."

Work zone safety is a serious matter. Check out these current statistics:

In 2013, eight people were killed in work zones, compared to seven in 2012.

Between 2009 and 2013, 53 people were killed and 2,781 people were injured in Missouri work zones.

Since 2000, 16 MoDOT employees have been killed in the line of duty.

The top five contributing circumstances for work zone crashes in 2013 were following too closely, improper lane use or changing lanes, inattention, driving too fast for conditions and failure to yield -- in that order.

The best defense in a work zone crash, or any crash, is a seat belt. In 2013, 63 percent of vehicle occupant fatalities were not wearing a seat belt.

To help make your travel safer, visit MoDOT's Traveler Information map at www.traveler.modot.org/map and find out what work zones you'll encounter before you go. Motorists can comment on the quality of MoDOT's work zones with an online customer survey at <http://www.modot.org/workzones/Comments.htm>.

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