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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Improving safety in highway work zones

"I warned the other flagman over the radio what was happening and then I dove into the ditch," said Kansas Department of Transportation Hays Area Superintendent Max Dirks. "All I could think about was the eight KDOT equipment operators working on the bridge - are they hurt, are they alive."

Dirks was detailing an incident that happened to him in a work zone where a semi driver had trouble stopping and came very close to hitting workers and nearby motorists. This, unfortunately, was just one of several stories of close calls in work zones told today at a statewide safety event in Topeka.

"Work zone safety and awareness is important, not just today, not just one week out of the year." Dirks said. "It is important every day you drive our Kansas roads."

Dirks was joined by Transportation Secretary Mike King, Kansas Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Mark Bruce and Kansas Turnpike Authority Engineering Technician Mark Roberts from Wichita. Numerous transportation partners also attended the event.

The safety event is one of several activities in Kansas as part of National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 11-15, which raises awareness of the dangers highway workers and motorists face in work zones. Highway workers and others are sharing stories this week in a blog series about work zone safety that can be read at <http://ksdotblog.blogspot.com/>. Electronic message boards along the highways will also have rotating work zone safety messages.

Buildings and structures across Kansas will be lit up in orange all week to highlight work zone safety. Check out the Governor's Mansion, the Amelia Earhart

Bridge in Atchison, the Visitor's Center in the Capitol, the Eisenhower State Office Building in Topeka, the 87th Street bridges over I-35 and Renner truss in Lenexa, the front of the Topeka City Hall and KDOT offices in Topeka, Salina, Norton, Chanute, Hutchinson and Garden City.

Last year in Kansas work zones, 480 people were injured and four people were killed. When traveling through a work zone, motorists should:

- ♦ Follow traffic control
- ♦ Stay alert
- ♦ Watch for workers
- ♦ Expect delays
- ♦ Allow ample space between you and the car in front of you
- ♦ Change lanes when directed to do so

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