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A nice, personal turn of events in U.S. 54 closure

Part of being a KDOT worker tasked with stopping and redirecting traffic for a highway closure is hearing complaints from motorists.

They're understandably frustrated by the inconvenience of having to seek another route. Sometimes, they make their frustration very clear.

One of the KDOT workers helping with the U.S. 54 closure west of Pratt got just that the other day.

The highway section between Pratt and Greensburg was closed because of a nearby butane leak discovered Sunday evening. It was a safety hazard, officials said, because a butane leak can easily ignite. The KDOT worker was just doing his job, responding to something beyond his control.

But the complaint was followed by something downright positive – an apology and a thanks from the very person who made the complaint.

Here is the nice note KDOT got Tuesday from the person:

“Just to forward a note to a guy working on the road closure at the Pratt location in Pratt. I was running late due to a doctor appointment and was stopped at the Pratt location to turn around and go to HWY 50 to get to Dodge. I was very nasty to the poor guy standing in the cold doing his job. They had the chore to go from car to car to tell them how to get where you were going. Super sorry to this guy. Thank you for keeping us safe! If I knew his name I would send a personal note. No excuse for my personal grumpy!”

And there you have it.

Gene Watts, the Pratt Area Superintendent, has helped oversee KDOT's response to the highway emergency. Watts acknowledged that road closures can bring some pretty heated complaints. But he agreed that the apology was a pleasant turn.

"We appreciate their apology," Watts said Wednesday. "We're doing the best we can to serve them, keep them safe in their travels."

The U.S. 54 stretch remains closed as of Thursday morning.

Michael Becker, one of the KDOT workers directing vehicles at the stop near Pratt on Wednesday said of the apology: "To know that somebody apologized makes us feel better. We're just doing the best we can with the circumstances."

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