



## Strategic Communications Monday, April 3, 2023

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Press Release #23-008

### **ODOT, OTA encourages motorists to *Make it Home Safe; Make Oklahoma Safe* with new work zone safety awareness campaign**

With a theme of *Make it Home Safe; Make Oklahoma Safe*, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and Oklahoma Turnpike Authority are encouraging motorists to follow a few simple rules of the road such as buckling up, putting away distractions and slowing down inside work zones to help get everyone home safe each day when traveling.

Drivers will see more work zones pop up this spring and summer. In fact, drivers can expect more than 160 active work zones in Oklahoma this summer driving season. These range from short-term maintenance projects with minimal impact to traffic to major interstate reconstruction, which can affect more than 100,000 vehicles per day.

“We have some significant projects starting in both Oklahoma City and Tulsa metro areas as well as several impactful construction work zones across the state this summer. We work hard at keeping work zones safe for motorists and workers but we cannot do it without motorists’ help. We emphatically plead with the public to be our safety partners by paying attention, slowing down and making sure all occupants of a vehicle are buckled up,” said Secretary of Transportation Tim Gatz, who also serves as ODOT and OTA executive director.

Overall, crashes and traffic fatalities are up in Oklahoma and nationwide. The data in Oklahoma shows that drivers and passengers are far more likely than workers to lose their lives in crashes inside work zones. In the past five years, 91 people, including one ODOT worker, were killed and 1,294 people were injured in more than 7,125 collisions

in Oklahoma work zones. Five people were killed and 81 were injured in 273 collisions in work zones through May 2022, which is the most recent data available.

Crashes involving commercial motor vehicles (semi-trucks) in Oklahoma work zones are also among the highest in the nation. In 2021, 93 work zone fatality crashes occurred with an additional 120 crashes resulting in serious injuries involving commercial motor vehicles. Motorists are reminded that these vehicles require more time to slow down and stop than others and that trucks should always be given extra space in order to keep everyone safe.

One of the simplest ways to lessen the possibility of a fatality if involved in a crash is to always wear a seat belt. Oklahoma ranks 40<sup>th</sup> in the nation for seat belt use. The only state in the region that ranks lower is Arkansas at 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation.

The multifaceted public outreach campaign by ODOT, OTA and its partners aims to remind drivers about the need for extra caution and complete attention while driving in work zones. The campaign includes:

- Gov. Kevin Stitt proclaimed April 17-21 as Oklahoma Work Zone Awareness Week in coordination with the National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week.
- SkyDance bridge over I-40 in Oklahoma City will glow orange April 20 as will the I-40 Diverging Diamond Interchange in Elk City during National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 17-21. These will serve as visual reminders to stay safe in Oklahoma's work zones and are in partnership with the City of Oklahoma City and the City of Elk City.
- New work zone safety Public Service Announcement for television, radio and social media debuted April 1.
- Events for teen drivers with our partners, Oklahoma Work Zone Safe and Oklahoma Challenge are taking place April 18-19 in Guymon. Students will receive red bands to be worn on the dominant hand that say "W82TXT" to remind those younger drivers to put the phone/distractions down and pay attention to the road.
- ODOT and OTA will honor their 72 fallen workers with a memorial service April 21 at ODOT headquarters in Oklahoma City.

The best way to not be caught off guard in work zones is to check before you go by using our free *Drive Oklahoma* mobile app, checking traffic advisories or a map of current work zones at [www.odot.org](http://www.odot.org) or viewing current traffic conditions at [www.oktraffic.org](http://www.oktraffic.org). Another way to be aware of work zones is to check online at [www.odot.org](http://www.odot.org) and click ODOT Project Status, which is a new map detailing highway project information. OTA projects are listed at [www.accessoklahoma.com](http://www.accessoklahoma.com)

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The Oklahoma Transportation Commission, Secretary of Transportation Tim Gatz and Chief Engineer Brian Taylor were joined by ODOT maintenance crew members at Monday's commission meeting to help kick off work zone awareness month activities. This year's campaign focuses on slowing down, not following too closely, putting away distractions and always buckling up to help keep everyone safe in work zones.

## Oklahoma Work Zone Safety Awareness April 2023

# MAKE OKLAHOMA SAFE



## APRIL

**3** Work zone safety campaign kick off-  
ODOT Commission meeting

**4** Work zone safety campaign kick off-  
OTA Board meeting

**5** Oklahoma Go Orange Day  
for Work Zone Safety

**6** Work Zone Safe at FCCLA Annual  
Convention-OKC Convention Center

**17-21** I-40 Elk City DDI will glow orange  
in honor of fallen workers and  
motorists

**18** Work Zone Safe Texas Co. Schools  
event in Guymon

**19** Work Zone Safe Beaver Co. Schools  
event in Guymon

**20** SkyDance Bridge will glow orange in  
honor of fallen workers and motorists

**21** Moment of Silence event for ODOT and  
OTA fallen employees

Make  
**OKLAHOMA**  
Safe



OKLAHOMA  
Transportation



OKLAHOMA  
Turnpike Authority