



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HIGHWAY WORKER MEMORIAL DAY PAYS TRIBUTE TO 166 EMPLOYEES Caltrans honors employees who have died in the line of duty

Los Angeles – The local office of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) observed Highway Worker Memorial Day today at 10:30 a.m. with a moving ceremony remembering employees who have lost their lives while on the job. Since 1924, 166 Caltrans workers have died. Most of these workers were struck while on the job by reckless or inattentive drivers traveling through work zones.

The ceremony was held at the Caltrans Los Angeles Headquarters building located at 100 South Main Street. The event featured a dramatic display of 166 orange coveralls with large name tags, one for each of the Caltrans highway workers killed while in the line of duty since 1924, when the Department began keeping such records – as well as a photo display of accidents involving highway workers.

“Today, we honor the 166 Caltrans employees who have made the greatest sacrifice of all, and we recognize the deep loss that their families and friends have endured,” said Raja Mitwasi, Caltrans Chief Deputy District Director for Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. “To them we offer our deepest sympathy.” Each year Caltrans district offices throughout the state dedicate one day during the month of April to pay respects to their fellow workers who have lost their lives. This year Caltrans lost three more employees: Jackie Ray Aldridge of Tehachapi, Daniel Broeske of Willits and Sean Merriman of Gilroy.

“Since 1999 Caltrans has been asking California drivers to ‘*Slow for the Cone Zone*’ and when they see the orange safety cones to take caution and slow down a bit, merge early, be prepared for sudden stops and avoid distractions such as using a cell phone or changing the radio station. Recent statistics show that drivers are listening to our message, and slowing down when they approach a work zone,” added Dan Freeman, Caltrans Deputy District Director for Maintenance.

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Caltrans reports a 35.19 percent decrease in California highway work zone fatalities of motorists since the Slow for the Cone Zone campaign began, compared to a 46 percent increase nationwide, excluding California. Caltrans' data also shows a 27 percent decrease in motorist injuries and 40 percent decrease in collisions by motorists in highway work zones.

“In spite of this decrease in accident statistics, we must not forget that highway work is dangerous. We must continue to improve safety, and to keep our employees and motorists safe,” concluded Raja Mitwasi.

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