



# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **NATIONAL WORK ZONE AWARENESS WEEK IS NOW UNDERWAY** **California strives to continue its downward trend of work zone fatalities**

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) announces that National Work Zone Awareness Week began yesterday and will continue through Saturday, April 8. Caltrans is hoping that by bringing awareness to work zone safety, California will continue its downward trend of fatalities.

According to California Highway Patrol (CHP) crash data, the number of collisions, injuries and deaths involving motorists in highway work zones is falling. CHP records show a 35 percent decrease in motorists' deaths in California work zones since 1999. The number of work zone collisions dropped in California from about 6,400 to approximately 4,100 in 2004. Fatalities decreased from 54 to 35 in the same span. Unfortunately, deaths in work zones across the country – outside of California – is on the increase. A total of 1,068 Americans died in work zone accidents during 2004, according to the Federal Highway Administration, up from 1,028 the year before.

Caltrans credits its "Slow for the Cone Zone" public awareness campaign for helping to lower California's work zone fatalities. "Slow for the Cone Zone" is designed to make drivers cognizant of workers in work zones and encourages them to ease off the gas pedal as they pass through.

"It is reasonable to think that our message is getting through," said Caltrans Director Will Kempton. "This is good news for highway workers. However, it represents not an end, but a beginning to our efforts."

During this year's National Work Zone Awareness Week, the Federal Highway Administration is employing the theme, "Working at the Speed of Night" to emphasize both the benefits and the dangers of night construction and maintenance work. Caltrans often schedules night work as a way of decreasing the amount of traffic congestion that highway improvement work can cause. Traffic volumes are lower at night, but the danger to highway workers and motorists traveling in work zones remains high after the sun goes down.

