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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highway Work Zones Require Alert Drivers and Workers

With highway construction season gaining momentum, extra caution is needed on the part of both drivers and highway workers. This year, the number of highway construction work zones is expected to be at an all time high, with as many as 375 state highway construction improvement projects underway this year.

April 3-9 is National Work-Zone Safety Awareness Week, an effort to heighten public awareness of work-zone safety, for the driver as well as the highway worker. Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman signed a proclamation designating the week as Nebraska Highway Work-Zone Safety Awareness Week.

The Nebraska Department of Roads and their transportation partners, the United States Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Nebraska State Patrol, and the Associated General Contractors of Nebraska are dedicated to enhancing work-zone safety for both the worker and the traveling public. They believe that increased worker training and enhanced awareness on the part of motorists and highway workers will lead to a reduction of fatalities and injuries for both.

In 2004, there was a decrease in both the total number of accidents and the number of work-zone related accidents on the state highway system. The number of work-zone accidents has been reduced over 50 percent from 1998 to 2004. However, the number of fatality accidents and fatalities in work zones has increased. Eight of eleven fatal work-zone crashes were run-off road crashes.

Also, seat-belt use among those involved in work-zone injury and fatalities has decreased from 2002 to 2004, with 78 percent of persons killed or injured in work zones in 2002 using restraints and only 75 percent in 2004. Motorists need to buckle up to decrease the number of injuries and fatalities in work zones.

Information Technology

Technology continues to play an important role in work-zone safety. This year, there are more than 40 permanent message signs at strategic locations throughout the state. These signs

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provide “real-time” information about congestion or incidents, which can help prevent crashes at the back end of a traffic slow-down.

For the fifth year, Nebraska’s statewide 511-telephone system is available to provide 24-hour-a-day, year-round traveler information. By dialing 511 on their cellular or landline telephone, motorists will be able to access the quickest, most up-to-date information about weather conditions, road conditions and travel advisories. The 511 system is also available on the Internet at www.nebraskatransportation.org.

Highway traffic cameras provide another tool for motorists in search of the latest traffic and road conditions. Currently, there are 27 cameras at various locations throughout the state that send pictures to the NDOR website for viewing, with plans for additional cameras in the future.

Motorists are reminded to stay alert when driving near highway construction sites any time of day or night, observe lower speed limits, heed posted warning signs, wear seat belts and avoid distractions while driving, including the use of cell phones.

It is important to remember that highway work zones are much more than a temporary inconvenience. Work zones are essential to building safer, smoother, improved roads that may ultimately save lives. ***Remember: When you’re in the driver’s seat, you make the difference. Drive safely in work zones!***

#NDOR#

For additional information, visit the NDOR website at www.nebraskatransportation.org.