

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 11, 2019

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Close calls in highway work zones occur all too often

The Kansas Department of Transportation and numerous transportation partners who work along the roadways know why work zone safety is so important.

“I yelled at the crew in the work zone and threw my flagging paddle towards the middle of the lane that I was standing in and flung myself into the ditch,” said KDOT Highway Maintenance Supervisor Kade Cooper, who is from Belleville. “From what I could hear, the flagging paddle made contact with the car where I would have been standing, and that is what got the driver’s attention.”

Equipment Operator Kayne Kraus from Admire has worked for the Kansas Turnpike Authority for two years. While out preparing to paint, he heard a loud boom, “and when I turned around, there was a vehicle sandwiched between the wall and the attenuator,” he said. “The driver had fallen asleep at the wheel and hit the attenuator that was a couple hundred feet behind me.”

Close calls are all too common for highway workers, law enforcement and emergency responders who are serving the public. Finding ways to improve work zone safety is imperative.

“If your job puts you along the highway, it’s important for you to not only be able to work safely but to feel safe as well,” said KDOT State Transportation Engineer Burt Morey.

Highway workers shared other stories of near misses at the statewide work zone safety event in Topeka today at the KDOT Gage office. This event is one of several activities in Kansas as part of National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 8-12, which raises awareness of the dangers highway workers and motorists face in work zones. Last year in Kansas, there were 1,396 work zone crashes - 398 people were injured and five people were killed.

Highway workers and others are sharing work zone stories each day this week in a blog series at <http://kansas transportation.blogspot.com/>. Electronic message boards along the highways will also have rotating work zone safety messages.

Buildings and structures across Kansas will be lit in orange all week to highlight work zone safety. Check out the Governor's Mansion, the Amelia Earhart Bridge in Atchison, the Visitor's Center in the Capitol, the Eisenhower State Office Building in Topeka, the front of the Topeka City Hall, the Travel Information Center on I-70 near Goodland and KDOT offices in Topeka, Salina, Norton, Chanute, Hutchinson and Garden City.

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