

REMARKS FOR KEN SIMONSON
MAY METRO EMPLOYMENT AND WORK ZONE SAFETY SURVEY
MEDIA EVENT
Tuesday, June 30, 2020

- **Good morning and thank you Steve McGough, the President and CFO of HCSS, and Jason Koss, the Director of Industry Relations for our Pittsburgh highway chapter, the Constructors Association of Western Pennsylvania, for joining us this morning.**

- **Like many other segments of our economy, the construction industry has not been immune from the economic damage caused by the coronavirus and related lock downs. The construction industry lost nearly one million jobs in April, for example.**

- **Yet, as many states have begun to ease those restrictions, construction employment has begun to bounce back in many parts of our country.**

- **According to new figures the Associated General Contractors of America is releasing today, construction employment increased in 329 out of 358 metro areas between April and May.**
- **Among the cities adding new construction jobs, Jason's hometown of Pittsburgh added 22,000 new jobs between April and May, a 60 percent increase. The Steel City had the third largest total increase in construction employment out of the 358 metro areas we track.**
- **As a construction economist, it is great to see so many more people working in construction in May compared to a month ago. Many of those workers will be busy improving our highways and bridges in work zones that are typically close to moving traffic.**

- **And it important to remember that any time your job site is just a few feet away from fast moving traffic, danger is never far away. Every year, hundreds of people die in highway work zone crashes, including many of the men and women our members employ.**
- **This is simply unacceptable. That is why the Associated General Contractors of America and HCSS each year undertake a nationwide survey of highway contractors that collected more than 200 responses this year. The purpose is to measure the extent, causes and possible solutions to the problem of highway work zone crashes and the injuries and fatalities that all too often come with them.**

- **The findings are sobering. Two-thirds of the respondents reported at least one crash in the past year involving a moving vehicle at highway work zones where they operate.**
- **More troubling, 33 percent of respondents report five or more crashes involving moving vehicles at their work zones during the past year.**
- **Those crashes pose a risk to construction workers. Indeed, 17 percent of the crashes resulted in injury to construction workers. But they are even more likely to harm the people in those cars. Drivers or passengers were injured in 44 percent of the crashes.**

- **Drivers and passengers are also more likely to be killed in work zone crashes. Contractors report that construction workers were killed in five percent of work zone crashes, while drivers or passengers were killed in 15 percent of work zone crashes.**
- **The sad fact is there are too many cars crashing into too many work zones, putting too many lives at risk.**
- **The only good news coming out of this year's highway work zone survey is that the coronavirus and the related reductions in driving appear to have helped improve work zone safety.**
- **Fifty-eight percent of respondents said changes in highway traffic levels since the coronavirus has made work zones safer. But with traffic already back to 90 percent of pre-coronavirus levels by some**

estimates, those safety improvements are likely fleeting, at best.

- **Indeed, with many people still reluctant to fly, it is likely that many more people will be hitting the road this summer for their vacation plans. That includes the upcoming July 4th weekend, when many will head to beaches or mountains now that stay-at-home orders are over.**
- **That is why we will continue to advocate for the kind of measures that we know can improve highway work zone safety. For example, 24 percent of respondents say a greater police presence at work zone construction sites will improve safety. Jason, for example, can talk about how a Pennsylvania pilot program to have mobile speed cameras at**

highway work zones is improving safety for workers and motorists.

- **Another 18 percent say that stricter laws against cell phone usage and distracted driving would help improve safety. And 17 percent would like to see greater use of devices like Jersey barriers to protect workers from speeding vehicles.**
- **Meanwhile, we are working with construction technology companies, like HCSS, to find ways to use software and hardware to better protect workers along our highways. Steve will talk about this a bit more.**
- **Better technology, strong barriers and tougher enforcement are important. But the bottom line is the easiest way to improve work zone safety is to get motorists to slow down and pay attention.**

- **Even when there are no workers present, motorists need to be careful navigating the narrower lanes and sudden lane shifts that are common to many highway work zones.**
- **We are all very busy. But our message to every motorist is this: when you see construction signs and orange barrels, obey the posted speed limit and keep your eyes on the road. And please, get off the phone.**
- **No amount of saved time, and certainly no social media post or text, is worth the safety of you, your passengers or the men and women working on our roads.**
- **Thank you and now I would like to ask Steve McGough to say a few words about why his firm,**

HCSS, is so committed to highway work zone safety.

Steve...

(Steve speaks)

- **Thank you, Steve, for your support and for the work you guys are doing to help protect workers and motorists alike.**
- **And now I would like to ask Jason Koss from the Constructors Association of Western Pennsylvania to talk about why highway work zone safety is so important to his chapter's members and how they are working with state and local officials to improve work zone safety.**

(Jason speaks)

- **Thank you, Jason. And now we would be happy to answer any questions you might have.**

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