

REMARKS FOR JEFF SHOAF
HIGHWAY WORK ZONE SAFETY SURVEY
MEDIA EVENT
Thursday, May 23, 2024

- **Good afternoon and thank you for joining us today. My name is Jeff Shoaf and I am the chief executive officer of the Associated General Contractors of America.**

- **With me is Steve McGough, the President and CEO of HCSS and Skip Partington, vice president with Elizabeth City, North Carolina-based Barnhill Contracting.**

- **AGC of America and our partners at HCSS conduct an annual survey of contractors who work near highways to measure work zone safety.**

- **This survey helps us understand the frequency, severity and broader impacts of vehicles crashing into highway work zones.**
- **And while work zones are dangerous year-round, those risks only increase during the summer. That is because it is the time of year when many people take to the road for vacations, in addition to the daily routines of work and personal travel.**
- **Those extra motorists are also likely to see even more work zones this summer thanks to the infusion of federal funds from the bipartisan infrastructure bill that was enacted several years ago.**
- **That means even more men and women will be working just a few feet, and sometimes inches, away from even more speeding vehicles this summer.**

- **Unfortunately, drivers are too often distracted, speeding and/or under the influence when driving through those work zones. Additionally, most states do too little or nothing to educate motorists about work zone safety or to protect workers and motorists in those work zones.**
- **Bad driving behavior and lax work zone safety laws don't just put construction workers at greater risk. As the new data we are releasing today makes clear, motorists are in even greater danger from those highway work zone crashes.**
- **According to the results of our highway work zone survey, sixty-four percent of respondents reported at least one crash in the past year involving a moving vehicle at highway work zones where they operate.**

- **More troubling, 24 percent of respondents reported experiencing five or more crashes during the past twelve months.**
- **Among the respondents who reported experiencing work zone crashes, 29 percent experienced a crash that resulted in injury to construction workers. But two-thirds—66 percent—experienced a crash in which drivers or passengers were injured.**
- **Work zone crashes are nearly three times as likely to result in fatalities to drivers and passengers compared to construction workers. Nine percent of contractors who experienced a work zone crash report that construction workers were killed in a crash in one or more of their work zones, while 24 percent of respondents who experienced a crash reported drivers or passengers were killed.**

- **All those work zone crashes inevitably delay construction work, extending the amount of time motorists and workers are at risk. Thirty-three percent of firms report their projects were delayed by at least one day because of a work zone crash in the past year.**
- **What is worse is that 49 percent of contractors report that the risk of highway work zone crashes is greater now than compared to a year ago. Another 48 percent say the risks are the same, and only 3 percent have seen any improvement.**
- **Too many motorists continue to speed through highway work zones. And a growing number are choosing to be distracted by their phones instead of paying attention.**

- **Yet work zone safety laws have failed to keep pace with the growing danger. Sixty-four percent of contractors report that the current penalties for moving violations in highway work zones are not sufficient to deter unsafe driving behavior.**
- **Contractors go to great lengths to set up safe work zones. But they need help to protect their workers and motorists. Eighty-two percent of contractors believe a greater police presence at their construction sites will improve worker and motorist safety, for example.**
- **Two-thirds of contractors want states to pass stricter laws against cell phone usage and distracted driving in work zones. And 60 percent want automated enforcement in highway work zones.**

- **Local transportation officials are also too unwilling to provide more separation between workers and motorists. Sixty-four percent of contractors report closing roads and detouring traffic would help improve safety near their work zones.**
- **Over the years we have seen how strong enforcement changes driver behavior. After years of tougher measures and strong enforcement, almost everybody knows you need to buckle up and you should not drink and drive.**
- **Yet too few drivers see the need to slow down and pay attention in work zones because too few states have made work zone safety a top priority.**
- **That is why AGC of America is pushing Congress to require the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to collect comprehensive data on**

work zone crashes, including who is killed or injured in those crashes. And the agency should require states to develop behavioral solutions to reduce crashes in highway work zones.

- **We are also working with our chapters to push for better enforcement and better education measures.**
- **Those efforts are working. Thanks to the efforts of our Carolinas AGC chapter, South Carolina officials began mandating that work zone safety be included in the materials new drivers need to know before getting a license. And thanks to our AGC of Vermont chapter, the state legislature just passed new legislation that will authorize automated enforcement on highway work zones.**
- **And, we are urging drivers to slow down and be more alert in highway work zones. We are releasing**

two new work zone safety public service messages today.

- **Here is the first one:** *(play video)*
- **And here is the second:** *(play video)*
- **Those are moving messages.**
- **We are asking you, the media, to help us share these messages with your audience. Together we can make those summer driving trips safer for everyone.**
- **Our message to motorists is clear: the seconds you save speeding through a work zone aren't worth the years you will spend agonizing over the life you take or the person you injure. So, slow down and stay alert in all work zones.**

- **And our plea to public officials is to join with AGC to make work zone safety as much a priority as driving sober and buckling up. Pass tougher laws, require better education and empower the police to protect workers and motorists alike.**
- **Now I would like to hand things over to Steve McGough from HCSS...**

(Steve talks)

- **Thank you, Steve.**
- **Skip Partington unfortunately knows the risks of highway work zones all too well. One of his firm's employees was recently killed in a work zone crash. He is here to tell us about that and to urge all motorists to be more careful.**

- **Skip...**

(Skip speaks)

- **Thank you, Skip. Now we would be happy to answer any questions you might have...**

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