

**REMARKS FOR KEN SIMONSON  
HIGHWAY WORK ZONE SAFETY SURVEY  
MEDIA EVENT  
Thursday, May 25, 2023**

- **Good afternoon and thank you for joining us today. With me is Steve McGough, the President and CEO of HCSS; Matt Musgrave, the Deputy Executive Director of the AGC of Vermont; Bobby Stem, the executive director of the Association of Oklahoma General Contractors, which is the statewide AGC highway chapter; and Tom Robins, the founder of WorkZoneSafe.com.**
  
- **Each year AGC of America and our partners at HCSS survey contractors who work near highways to measure the safety of those work zones.**
  
- **This survey helps us better understand the frequency, severity and broader impacts of vehicles crashing into highway work zones.**

- **We are on the brink of having a lot more of those work zones now that the money from the bipartisan infrastructure law is finally being put to work fixing our nation's aging roads and bridges.**
- **Welcome as it is, all that road work means drivers are likely to be passing through multiple highway work zones during the summer driving season that traditionally starts this weekend.**
- **All that new construction means even more men and women of the construction industry will be working just a few feet, and sometimes inches, away from speeding vehicles.**
- **Unfortunately, cars and work zones don't mix well. Drivers are too often distracted, speeding and/or under the influence when driving through the work**

**zones. Additionally, most states do too little or nothing to educate motorists about work zone safety and far from enough to protect workers and motorists in those work zones.**

- This is bad news not just for construction workers, but also for the people traveling through those work zones. 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, fifty-five 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, 28 percent experienced a crash that resulted in injury to construction workers. But drivers and passengers were more than twice as likely to be injured in those crashes at more than double the rate – 59 percent of respondents who experienced a crash reported drivers or passengers were injured.**
- **Drivers and passengers also are twice times as likely to be killed in work zone crashes compared to construction workers. Eight 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 16 percent of respondents who experienced a crash reported drivers or passengers were killed.**

- **Construction firms are going to great lengths to protect workers and motorists alike. They are training workers to be more aware of their work zone surroundings. They are better marking highway work zones and laying them out in a way that provides more protections to workers.**
- **They are also investing in technology – like intrusion detection systems that alert workers when vehicles enter work zones.**
- **Despite all that firms are doing to make work zones safer, a shocking 97 percent of contractors report that highway work zones are as dangerous, or more dangerous, than they were on year ago.**

- **One of the main challenges is that elected and appointed officials are not doing enough to protect workers and motorists in highway work zones.**
- **Not enough states allow speed cameras in highway work zones. Yet 53 percent of contractors report automatic ticketing for speeding in work zones would help. Officials also need to rethink the severity of those automated tickets where they are allowed. In Maryland, where six workers were tragically killed in a single work zone crash in late March, the maximum penalty for an automated speeding ticket in a work zone is only \$75.**
- **There is also too little enforcement of existing highway work zone laws. Seventy-nine percent of contractors want a greater police presence in work zones and 65 percent want stricter enforcement.**

- **Yet too many police departments and highway patrols fail to put a priority on protecting work zones.**
- **Local transportation officials are also too unwilling to provide more separation between workers and motorists. Fifty-six percent of contractors report closing roads and detouring traffic would help improve safety near their work zones. Yet many states are reluctant to close lanes adjacent to work zones because of the impacts those closures have on traffic.**
- **Lenient laws, lax enforcement and putting convenience over safety means many of the men and women who fix our roads and bridges spend much of their times scared for their lives. We spoke to some of those workers from Maryland, where that terrible work zone tragedy occurred. As you will see,**

**what happened on March 22<sup>nd</sup> is, sadly, much closer to the rule than the exception.**

- **Here is their story (*Turmail will play the video*)...**
- **All is not doom and gloom however, as you will hear soon. States like Oklahoma are taking aggressive steps to improve the safety of our highway work zones.**
- **Starting November 1, Oklahoma will become the first state in the country to require new drivers to complete a one-hour online work zone safety training program as a pre-condition for receiving their driver's license.**
- **And Pennsylvania and New York have recently enacted measures to allow a limited number of speed cameras on highway work zones.**



- **But more needs to be done. That is why AGC of America is calling on every state to do more to make our highway work zones safer. We are urging every state to follow Oklahoma's lead and require new drivers to learn about work zone safety. Every state should also provide a greater police presence in work zones, authorize the use of speed cameras in those zones, and set higher fines for people who operate unsafely in those work areas.**
- **Our transportation network may be invaluable, but the lives of workers and motorists are priceless. And nobody should die because our laws fail to penalize unsafe operations in work zones in the same way they punish drunk driving and stigmatize not using a seat belt.**

- **Even as we call on states to do more, we are also urging motorists to do their part to make highway work zones safer.**
- **As Americans get ready to hit the road this summer, we are urging them to stay off the gas and put the phone down when they are in a work zone.**
- **Now I would like to hand things over to Steve McGough from HCSS...**

*(Steve talks)*

- **Thank you, Steve. The fears you heard from the workers in Maryland are not unique. Indeed, we have invited Matt Musgrave, the deputy executive director of the AGC of Vermont, to talk about some of the safety hazards road contractors face in Vermont.**

- **Matt...**

*(Matt speaks)*

- **Thank you, Matt. And finally, I would like to invite Tom Robins and Bobby Stem to share their story of how they were able to get Oklahoma to become the first state in the U.S. to require work zone safety training as a precondition for getting a driver's license.**

- **Tom and Bobby...**

*(Tom and Bobby speak)*

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

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