

# Idaho Transportation Department

## *News Release*

April 2, 2004

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Motorists asked to slow down, drive carefully in road work zones**

BOISE - Spring marks the unofficial start of Idaho's construction season and transportation officials will observe Work Zone Safety Week, April 5-9, to remind motorists to slow down in work zones. The Idaho Transportation Department, the Idaho Associated General Contractors (AGC) and the Ada County Highway District (ACHD) emphasize the importance of slowing down in work zones to ensure the safety of motorists and construction workers.

"Highway work zones are considered among the most hazardous places for workers in the United States, but they can be just as dangerous for motorists," said Michael Gifford of Idaho AGC. "The stark but little-known fact is that four out of five people killed in work zone crashes are drivers and passengers, rather than workers."

While injuries and fatalities among workers are declining, crashes involving motorists have increased in recent years. Accidents in highway work zones claimed two lives statewide in 2003. Both fatalities were motorists. During the same year, there were 357 collisions in Idaho work zones; 254 of those were in southwest Idaho, which includes the Boise area. The year before, there were 266 work zone collisions statewide.

Rear-end collisions account for most work zone crashes. Following too closely, inattentive driving, failing to yield the right of way and improper lane changes also contribute to accidents in work zones.

"Drivers have the most at stake in work zones and can do the most to keep themselves and others out of danger," said Craig Quintana of ACHD. "Slowing down and leaving plenty of space between you and the car ahead are two of the easiest things you can do to improve your safety when driving through a work zone."

Other tips for motorists to increase safety include: plan ahead -- allow for the few extra minutes a construction project may add to the commute; and minimize distractions such as cell phones or the car stereo.

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“Our goal is to reduce work zone crashes and fatalities by reminding drivers about the importance of work zone safety and the reality of work zone crashes,” said Dave Ekern, ITD Director. “At the end of the day, we want to make sure everyone gets home safely.”

Idaho State Police officers will increase patrols in work zones during Work Zone Safety Week. The standard fine for speeding in Idaho is \$53; the fine for a work zone speed violation is \$82.50.

For information about the state highway and interstate system, consult the Idaho Road Report. Call 336-6600 within the Treasure Valley calling area, or 1-888-IDA-ROAD (432-7623) outside the Treasure Valley. For online access, visit the transportation department’s road report at [www.itd.idaho.gov](http://www.itd.idaho.gov) . The service reports weather-related road conditions through mid- to late April, when road conditions across the state become generally favorable. Then the service will switch from reporting construction activities that will impact traffic.

For information on ACHD projects, visit [www.achd.ada.id.us](http://www.achd.ada.id.us) .

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**EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:**

- Reporters and photographers are invited to meet with agency staff and others who work on site at road improvement projects **Tuesday, April 6**. Please call Darla Christiansen, ITD Public Affairs Specialist, at 334-8874 to arrange a time.
- Idaho State Police officers will increase patrols in work zones during Work Zone Safety Week. To arrange for a ride-along with an Idaho State Police officer, call Lt. Robert Lee at 334-3731.
- Please see attached list of tips for safe driving through work zones.
- Additional contacts:  
Michael Gifford, Executive Vice President, Idaho Associated General Contractors,  
(208) 344-2531

Craig Quintana, Public Relations Officer, Ada County Highway District,  
(208) 387-6107

