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## Agencies put focus on work zone awareness

### *Worker, motorist safety emphasized*

DEFIANCE, Ohio (July 9, 2019) - The heart of summer is here --and with it, the height of construction season on area highways.

Ohio's valuable highway network is maintained through consistent attention, making work zones a necessity. Reminding motorists to give workers within those zones the consideration and level of safety needed to perform their work was the focus of an event today with representatives of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), the Ohio Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust (LECET), and the Ohio State Highway Patrol, Defiance post.

The event was held on site of a chip seal project performed by crew members from both ODOT District 1 and 2 on state Route 18/state Route 281, Defiance. Chip seals are a common pavement maintenance practice in northwest Ohio and will account for several of the work zones motorists will encounter this summer.

"We often concentrate our work zone safety awareness on major highway projects. But many of our work zones in northwest Ohio are on two-lane routes, where our crews must flag traffic around a narrow one-lane work zone," said Pat McColley, deputy director for ODOT District 2, headquartered in Bowling Green.

The chip seal method seals the pavement against moisture damage through the placement of a thin layer of liquid asphalt which is then covered with a fine grade of stone. The stone is rolled and compressed into the asphalt and the pavement swept to remove any loose stone.

"Controlling traffic through chip seal projects is challenging because our zone extends and moves with the operation," said Chris Hughes, deputy director for ODOT District 1, headquartered in Lima. "Motorists can become impatient as they pass through the long

work zone which is needed for the multiple pieces of equipment employed in the operation,” he said.

“Who is looking out for the safety of our union membership, and ODOT as we work to make our roads safer? The answer should be all of us,” said Bethany Billi, Ohio LECET director. Billi said her organization is working to educate the public regarding work zone safety by partnering with entities such as ODOT, creating and distributing work zone safety messages for the media, and partnering with Maria’s Message to target young and new drivers of the perils of distracted driving. “When you see the orange barrels, flashing warning lights and barrier walls, slow down, move over, put down your phone and obey traffic laws. Please drive like someone you love works here because someone we love does,” said Billi.

#### Work zone stats 2009 - 2018

- Last year, there were 14 people killed - including ODOT’s John Pasko. This is down significantly from the 30 killed in 2015.
- In 2018, 961 people were injured in work zone crashes.
- Last year, there were a total of 4,662 crashes in work zones in Ohio. Thankfully, this number has been trending down since 2015.
- By far, rear end crashes are the top type of work zone crashes and following too closely is the top factor.
- Most work zone crashes occur during daylight hours on dry pavement between the hours of noon and 5 p.m.
- Historically, the month with the highest occurrence of work zone crashes is August.

#### Workers struck

- From 2016 - 2018 there were 140 workers struck (this includes contractors, city workers, utility workers, and ODOT forces).
- Cuyahoga County led the state with 20, Franklin County had 19, and Summit County had 10. Hamilton and Lucas each had 9.

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