

NEWS RELEASE

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District 7: Los Angeles & Ventura Counties
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALTRANS REMEMBERS THE FALLEN, URGES SAFETY AT WORKERS' MEMORIAL EVENT

LOS ANGELES – California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) employees and guests took a moment out of their day to recognize and remember District 7 workers killed on the job at a Workers' Memorial event today.

Statewide, Caltrans has lost 184 employees since 1924, when the Department began keeping records of such fatalities. The 32 workers recognized were from District 7, covering Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The last District 7 employee to be killed on the job was in 2005.

After two years without a Caltrans fatality, Oscar Vargas, 54, of Chula Vista, died from injuries received after losing control of his work truck while leaving a nighttime project along Interstate 8 in Imperial County on July 14, 2015. Vargas was a structures construction engineer and 29-year Caltrans veteran.

“We will always keep safety as our number one priority for motorists and our employees,” said Caltrans District 7 Director Carrie Bowen. “To keep California’s highway system running many Caltrans employees work within feet or inches of vehicles zipping by, so it is important for everyone to Be Work Zone Alert.”

Highway construction and maintenance work is one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States. In 2014, 63 men and women died in California work zones. This includes both workers and motorists, with drivers and passengers accounting for 85 to 90 percent of the people who are killed in highway work zones. These numbers don't include the close calls, such as the more than 1,000 Caltrans vehicles hit on the highways each year—the equivalent of almost three per day.

Drivers can dramatically improve safety in work zones by slowing down and reducing distractions like texting and talking on the phone, and complying with the Move Over law, which requires motorists to move over if it is safe to do so, or slow down, when approaching vehicles displaying flashing amber warning lights.

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“As long as there are motorists who are complacent, inattentive, impaired, and reckless, all motorists and highway workers will continue to be at risk,” said Bowen. “It’s up to each and every motorist to end the vicious and dangerous cycle, and *Be Work Zone Alert, Slow For The Cone Zone and Move Over.*”

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