

News Release

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MnDOT pauses work for statewide safety stand down in recognition of two recent construction zone deaths

ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Transportation paused work on Monday in a first-ever statewide safety stand down to honor the tragic loss of two construction contractors on Minnesota roads last week and to focus on improving safety in work zones.

Not only is the safety stand down a deliberate pause in work to reflect on the recent lives lost, but it is also a time for staff to recommit to the safety of every person who works with or for our agencies. This included discussions, listening and sharing personal experiences to help our agency learn from each other to help improve safety for all of us.

"I am deeply saddened and concerned by the recent tragic incidents that took the lives of two contractors working to improve Minnesota roads. Today, MnDOT staff took an unprecedented step to pause work and honor the lives of these two men and to recommit and focus on the safety of every person who works for and with our agency," said MnDOT Commissioner Nancy Daubenberger. "Safety is always our number one priority at MnDOT, and we will continue to work closely with our staff and contractors to improve our work zones to help ensure we all get home to our families safely."

"Every crash is more than a statistic — it's a family changed forever. Work zones are places where Minnesotans are on the job, not just cones and signs on the road," said State Patrol Colonel Christina Bogojevic. "We need every driver to slow down, pay attention and treat those areas with extra care. The safety of our workers and of everyone traveling on our roads depends on it."

"Tragic incidents like this are a sobering reminder that contact with objects or equipment remains the leading cause of workplace fatalities in Minnesota. On average, eight workers lose their lives each year due to these types of incidents," said Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach, Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. "These are not just statistics—they are people who didn't make it home to their loved ones at the end of the workday. Preventing these tragedies starts with proper training and strong safety protocols. Employees exposed to traffic or mobile earth-moving equipment must wear high-visibility garments, and that equipment must be outfitted with functioning backup alarms or guided by trained signal persons. These safeguards are not optional—they are essential to saving lives."

"Construction is, by its nature, a high-risk industry. While the specific details of these recent incidents have not been made public, we know from experience that the causes of serious injuries and fatalities often follow familiar patterns," said Associated General Contractors CEO Tim Worke. "As we reflect upon these tragedies, we must re-examine where and how we can improve safety culture and make certain that everyone working in the construction industry returns safely to their families each day."

“The Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council stands with our partners in mourning the loss of two construction workers in recent days and in calling for renewed vigilance in every highway work zone,” said Dan McConnell, President of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council. “Every worker deserves to come home safely at the end of the day. We honor the memory of Pierre Mack, a member of LIUNA Local 563, and Adam Smith, a member of IUOE 139, by strengthening our shared commitment to safety – on the job site, in project oversight, and on the roadways we all travel.”

While these incidents occurred within a work zone, motorists should do their part to keep workers safe. Drivers should always be prepared to encounter traffic changes when approaching work zones including lane closures, lane shifts, uneven road surfaces, slow-moving heavy equipment and slow or stopped traffic. To keep everyone safe, drivers must:

- **Obey posted speed limits.** The fine for speeding in a work zone is \$300.
- **Drive undistracted.** Avoid using cell phones, mobile devices, adjusting the radio – even eating – while in work zones.
- **Move over.** Give workers room to safely complete their work.
- **Know before you go.** Get real-time information about traffic and road conditions at www.511mn.org or get the free 511mn smartphone app at Google Play or the App Store.
- **Be patient.** Expect delays, especially during peak travel times.
- **Do the [zipper merge](#).**
- **Avoid making unnecessary lane changes.**
- **Never enter a road blocked with barriers or cones.**

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