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District: 05 – Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **DRIVING TOWARD SAFETY: OBEYING SPEED LIMITS AND TRAFFIC LAWS THROUGH HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION ZONES SAVES LIVES AND MONEY**

**MONTEREY COUNTY** – Spring has arrived in Monterey County – bringing with it warmer temperatures, tourists and increased traffic on the roadways. It also brings the beginning of construction on the Prunedale Improvement Project (PIP) along a 10-mile stretch of Highway 101 between Boronda Road in Salinas to just beyond Crazy Horse Canyon Road in Prunedale, which will continue for the next three years.

The PIP construction area, and all Caltrans construction zones, is clearly marked with signs – some indicating reduced speed limits, others warning that "Fines Double in Construction Zones." The reason for these changes and seemingly harsh fines is safety – for those working along the highways and, particularly, for drivers and vehicle occupants.

"Too often drivers don't heed the warning signs when they're going through construction zones," says Don Bachman, Deputy Executive Director for the Transportation Agency for Monterey County. "One of the most important factors for traffic safety, especially in construction zones, is driver attentiveness. We hope to raise awareness about the importance of exercising caution in work zones in hopes that all those on our roadways will be able to return home to their families safe and sound at the end of each day."

In 2009 there were 46 fatalities in highway construction and/or maintenance zones in California; 45 of those fatalities were vehicle occupants.

"We know that people on the road have a lot on their minds, but focusing on driving safely has to be the priority," says Bachman. "Drivers need to watch those signs and most importantly, slow down. Even if you don't see people working along the highway, there are a lot of other construction hazards to be aware of – like reduced shoulders, merging traffic, or uneven pavement."

**The bottom line: Slowing for the Cone Zone makes our highways safer for everyone.**

### **Safety Tips for Driving in Highway Construction Zones**

- **Expect the Unexpected:** Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be restricted, and people may be working on or near the road.
- **Slow Down:** Speeding is one of the major causes of work zone accidents.
- **Keep a Safe Distance:** The most common type of accident in a work zone is a rear end collision. Maintain two car lengths between you and the car in front of you as well as road crews and their equipment.
- **Pay Attention:** The warning signs are there to help you move safely through the work zone. Observe the posted signs.
- **Obey Road Crew Flaggers:** The flagger knows what is best for moving traffic safely in the work zone. A flagger has the same authority as a regulatory sign. You can be cited for disobeying his or her directions.
- **Stay Alert and Minimize Distractions:** Dedicate your full attention to the roadway and avoid changing radio stations or using cell phone while driving in a work zone.
- **Keep up with Traffic Flow:** Motorists can help maintain traffic flow and posted speeds by merging as soon as possible. Do not drive right up to the lane closure and then try to barge in.
- **Check Road Conditions:** Schedule enough time to drive safely. For lane closure information and for traffic updates on Caltrans projects in Monterey County, residents can call the District 5 toll free number at 1-831-372-0862, Caltrans' hotline at 1-877-448-6771, or visit Caltrans' website:  
[www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/maint/road/upmon.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/maint/road/upmon.htm)
- **Be Patient and Stay Calm:** Remember, the road crews are working to improve the road and your commute.