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Albany, NY

Governor Cuomo Announces Highway Workers Memorial to Debut at the 2021 Great New York State Fair

Memorial to Honor the Workers Who Lost their Lives Protecting the Public While Maintaining a Safe Highway System in New York

Operation Hardhat Update: 871 Tickets Issued to Motorists During Highway Work Zone Enforcement Activities Thus Far in 2021

Construction Photos and Rendering Available [Here](#)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a new memorial honoring fallen highway workers across New York is currently under construction and will be unveiled at the 2021 Great New York State Fair. The memorial, which will be located near the midway entrance and west of the Horticulture Building on the fairgrounds, is meant to honor all transportation workers killed while performing their job duties on or near New York's thousands of miles of highways, including State Department of Transportation and Thruway Authority employees, municipal highway workers, contractors, consultants and towing service employees.

"These hardworking and dedicated New Yorkers routinely put their personal safety on the line to build our bridges, pave our roads and maintain a safe, reliable infrastructure, so that all New Yorkers can reach their destinations as safely as possible," **Governor Cuomo said**. "We are grateful for the work that these women and men perform year-round and this new memorial, which will be ready in time for the 2021 Great New York State Fair, will serve as a lasting tribute to all the workers who lost their lives while performing their duties."

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, from 2003-2017, 1,844 workers lost their lives at road construction sites across the United States, averaging 123 per year. The State Department of Transportation alone has lost 56 workers during its existence.

The new memorial will include a centerpiece featuring a bronze sculpture of shovels, hard hats and boots on a platform surrounded by four bronze traffic cones and a dedication plaque. It will include paved walkways and seating for respectful reflection. Shrubs and trees will be planted around the centerpiece and along the outside of the memorial.

Today's announcement also comes at a time when New York State Police and local law enforcement agencies are writing tickets in record numbers to crack down on motorists who flagrantly disobey vehicle and traffic laws in highway work zones as part of Operation Hardhat. Last year, 1,770 tickets were issued by State Police during "Operation Hardhat" activities, which surpassed 2019's total by nearly 70 percent. Already this year, troopers have issued 871 tickets in highway work zones on state roadways. Additionally, local law enforcement agencies have written 35 tickets this year under the initiative.

State Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez said, "DOT employees are members of our family and they risk their lives daily. We are forever grateful to the women and men who construct, operate and maintain our roadways and this new memorial is a lasting tribute to the many highway and transportation workers who died protecting the public while keeping our roads and bridges safe. More than that, it represents an opportunity to reach hundreds of thousands of people who visit the fairgrounds - making them aware that their failure to pay attention while driving, has real life and death consequences. It cannot be said enough: when you're driving, especially through a highway work zone, put down your phone, keep your eyes on the road, slow down and please, pay attention. People's lives depend on you and your actions."

Thruway Authority Executive Director Matthew J. Driscoll said, "We will forever remember and honor our highway workers who sacrificed their lives while doing their jobs for the betterment and safety of all drivers. This new memorial is a stark reminder of the dangers our roadside workers face every day. I encourage all fairgoers to visit this memorial and pause to remember the sacrifices these men and women have made."

New York State Police Superintendent Kevin P. Bruen said, "The New York State Police are committed to keeping our roadways safe - for those who travel them, and for those who work on them. Through education and enforcement campaigns like Operation Hardhat, we are working to ensure our highway workers are able to go home to their families at the end of the workday, and protect motorists as well. Drivers should follow the rules of the road, including work zone speed limits and move over when they see flashing lights. The choices you make behind the wheel can have serious, even deadly consequences. Make the right choice."

DMV Commissioner and Chair of the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee Mark J.F.

Schroeder said, "Let this memorial serve as a reminder to all of us that our highway workers put their lives at risk every day, and that we all play a part in protecting them as they work to improve the safety of our roads and bridges. Work zone safety is the responsibility of every motorist. When you see orange signs, yellow vests, or flashing lights, slow down, stay alert and avoid distractions. Give our dedicated highway workers the space they need to do their jobs safely and efficiently, and allow them to return home safely at the end of the day."

New York State Fair Director Troy Waffner said, "The men and women who keep our roads safe for us to drive on take great risks every day in doing so. We are honored to be able to give this memorial a home where many New Yorkers will see it. I hope everyone who sees it will take a moment to reflect on the needless loss of life behind this memorial and use that memory to help keep our roads and the people who work on them safer."

DOT works year-round to enhance safety for its workforce. Portable rumble strips that precede work zones and prevent distracted driving are now being utilized in every region of the state for maintenance and contractor project work zones to better protect flaggers and transportation workers. Work zone cameras are also being implemented in DOT maintenance work zones and contractor project work zones across New York to better protect transportation workers.

This year, the Thruway Authority is deploying more than a dozen new trucks throughout its four maintenance divisions across the state featuring enhanced technology focused directly on improving work zone safety. The vehicles include large radar board displays that alert motorists of the work zone

speed limit compared to their approach speed, directional arrows, traffic attenuators, and wider reinforced man buckets with swing gates to allow for easier and safer deployment or removal of cones and barrels.

On March 17, 2006, Patrick Mapleson, a highway maintenance worker for the New York State Department of Transportation was struck and killed by a distracted driver while working along the Sunrise Highway in Eastport. In the years that have followed, his daughter, Karen Torres, has traveled across the state, sharing the story of her father's death with driver education classes, school assemblies, peer leadership programs, church groups, rotary clubs and corporate organizations.

Karen Torres said, "My hope is when people visit the memorial, they will give a moment of silence not only to the brave men and women who have lost their lives, but to the families who continue to grieve their loss."

On October 28, 2016, Thruway Maintenance employee Ron Deming was struck by a vehicle and fatally injured while assisting in the recovery of a passenger car along the shoulder of Interstate 90. Almost five years later, Ron's wife, Sally Deming, continues to be outspoken about the importance of the Move Over law and the impacts work zone incidents can have on workers' families.

Sally Deming said, "It's been nearly five years since Ron's death. That is five years of laughs, moments, and memories that we will never get back. Ron never got to meet his grandson or enjoy retirement with his family. I am thankful for this new memorial and it is a reminder that all roadside workers want to go home to their families each night. Sadly, not all have been so fortunate."