



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2015

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Busy road construction year makes work zone safety more important than ever

With St. Louis County investing \$119 million to improve 420 miles of roads and bridges over the next two years, motorists should expect to see a lot of orange cones. Even more important, motorists should remember to slow down, pay attention and take extra care when traveling near or through a work zone.

St. Louis County Commissioners, along with staff from the Public Works Department, Sheriff's Office and area contractors, will join together to deliver an important safety reminder at a news conference Tuesday, June 9, at 1:30 p.m., in the parking lot of Pike Lake Elementary School, 5682 Martin Road. Martin Road, also known as County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 9, is one of approximately 100 project sites scheduled county-wide during the 2015 construction season. More than seven miles of the road will be resurfaced, resulting in temporary lane closures while work is in progress.

In the last five years, there have been 113 crashes in work zones in St. Louis County. As a result of those crashes, one person died, and 37 people were hurt.

"We put a lot of effort into keeping workers safe in construction zones," said County Board Chair Pete Stauber, "But what many people don't realize is the victims of work zone crashes typically aren't the workers. It's the motorists and their passengers who are most likely to get hurt, or worse."

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The best advice for motorists is to slow down and pay attention. Even when slower speed limits are posted, drivers should be alert for vehicles in front of them that may brake suddenly. Motorists are also urged to put down their phone to lessen their chance of being distracted.

“Our own staff has been seeing it, and we’re hearing it from our contractors as well – a disturbing trend,” said Victor Lund, St. Louis County traffic engineer. “We’re seeing a rise in distracted driving – people texting or looking at their phone instead of the road. And even worse, we’re seeing drivers willfully ignoring the flaggers’ signs telling them to go slowly or stop.”

Texting, emailing and web use while driving is illegal in Minnesota, including when stopped in traffic. Drivers under the age of 18 are prohibited from any cell phone use.

St. Louis County, through its Public Works Department and Sheriff’s Office, participates in the Toward Zero Deaths program, which focuses on four “Es” to reduce traffic injuries and fatalities: Education, Emergency Medical and Trauma Services, Enforcement and Engineering.

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