

Track! Robert Lee High School recently sent athletes to the area track meet in Mertzon. The 800m relay (top photo), consisting of Kailey Freeman, Ryen White, Natalie Immel, and Zoey Nichols, placed first. The 400m relay team (middle photo), which includes Ryen White, Natalie Immel, Kailan Pogue, and Zoey Nichols, placed second. The 1600m relay placed third, which includes Kailey Freeman, Ryen White, Natalie Immel, and Jacquelyn Saxton.

TxDOT calls for safe driving in work zones

Following a year in which fewer people were killed in work zone crashes in Texas, TxDOT is calling on all drivers to stay vigilant and help continue that downward trend. As National Work Zone Awareness Week kicks off, TxDOT's "Be Safe. Drive Smart." campaign is reminding drivers to stay alert and exercise caution when going through road construction and maintenance areas.

Traffic fatalities in the state's work zones were down 16% in 2022, decreasing for the first time since 2018. Despite that, 205 people lost their lives and another 788 were seriously injured in Texas work zones last year. The vast majority of those killed, 85%, were drivers or their passengers.

"Although it's encouraging to see a reduction in the number of work zone crashes and fatalities last year, one life lost is too many," said TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams. "We're calling on all Texas drivers to slow down and stay alert when traveling through work zones. Doing so could save a life, including your own."

The "Be Safe. Drive Smart." campaign offers five tips for safely navigating work zones:

1. Slow down. Follow the posted speed limit and proactively adjust your driving to match road conditions. Excessive speed is one of the leading causes of work zone crashes.

2. Pay attention. Avoid distractions, keep your mind on the road and put your phone away.

3. Watch out for road crews. Roadside workers want to get home safely, too. Always follow instructions and be mindful of construction area road signs.

4. Don't tailgate. Give yourself room to stop in a hurry, should traffic stop suddenly. Rear-end collisions are the most common type of work zone crashes.

5. Allow extra time. Road construction can slow things down. Count on it, and plan for it.

TxDOT also reminds motorists of the state's Move Over/Slow Down law that requires drivers to move over a lane or reduce their speed to 20 mph below the posted speed limit when approaching TxDOT, emergency, law enforcement, tow truck or utility vehicles stopped with flashing lights activated on the roadside.

Traffic fines double in work zones when workers are present and can cost up to \$2,000. Failure to heed the Move Over/Slow Down law can also result in a fine of up to \$2,000.

Roadway safety professionals are encouraged to wear orange on April 19 for National Go Orange Day to proudly show their support for work zone safety.

TxDOT's "Be Safe. Drive Smart." campaign is a key component of #EndTheStreakTX, a broader social media and word-of-mouth effort that encourages drivers to make safer choices while behind the wheel to help end the streak of daily deaths. Nov. 7, 2000, was the last deathless day on Texas roadways.



Deadline to submit information to The Observer/Enterprise is Monday at 5 pm.

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