



NEWS RELEASE

Today's Date: Tuesday, June 21, 2011
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALTRANS WORKER KILLED YESTERDAY ON FREEWAY RAMP IS THIRD TO DIE ON JOB SINCE MAY

SACRAMENTO – Caltrans announced that Richard Gonzalez, a 52-year-old Caltrans maintenance worker, died shortly before 9 a.m. today after being struck by a vehicle while he was picking up litter along the northbound Interstate 15 connector ramp to eastbound State Route 94 in San Diego.

He is the third Caltrans worker to die on the job in 48 days - the most ever in such a short period of time.

On May 4, Stephen Palmer, Sr. was struck by a trolley and killed in National City near San Diego. On June 7, Jaime Obeso was killed by an errant vehicle while working on Interstate 8 in Imperial County.

Caltrans has called a statewide safety stand down to emphasize safety procedures. All routine or regularly-scheduled highway maintenance activities are being temporarily halted to revisit and reinforce all aspects of field safety and to ask the public for help. Caltrans will post notices on its statewide network of more than 700 electronic highway message signs reminding motorists to watch out for Caltrans employees. Flags will be at half staff on Caltrans buildings across the state in remembrance of Caltrans workers who have needlessly lost their lives this year.

“Every day, highway workers put their lives in danger just by going to work,” said Acting Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty. “These three tragic incidents are sobering reminders that we all must do everything we can to keep our highways safe. Motorists must slow down, watch out for highway workers and safely move over a lane when passing work crews.”

A January 2010 state law requires motorists to ‘move over or slow down’ when they see a Caltrans vehicle flashing its warning lights so the public is urged to make an extra safety effort while driving through work zones.

Highway construction and maintenance work is one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States. The risk of death is seven times greater for highway workers than for the average worker. Since the 1920s, 178 Caltrans employees have died while on the job.

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C A L T R A N S