

# WAYFINDER

*A Message from the Director:*

## Promoting Safety



I'd like to take a moment to emphasize the importance of safety. Temperatures are warming up which means an increase in both travel and construction. Ensuring safety on our roadways and in our work zones is paramount. It's not just a goal—it's a commitment and a culture.

Our mission is three simple, yet powerful words: "Toward Zero Deaths." According to the Highway Safety Office (HSO), there were 227 traffic fatalities in Nebraska in 2023. We can all agree that's 227 too many. In 2020, the HSO published Traffic Crash Facts indicating two-thirds of the people who were in a fatal crash were not wearing seat belts. In fact, the same publication showed 19% of Nebraskans avoid using seat belts.



As we work to promote safety externally, we need to stay committed to safety internally. Secure our work zones, properly train employees on equipment, follow every procedure, and make safety a daily conversion. Let's recommit ourselves to fostering a culture of safety, so together we can make significant strides toward our shared goal of zero deaths.▲



*We'd like to hear from you. If you have an update to share, please send it to [ndot.wayfinder@nebraska.gov](mailto:ndot.wayfinder@nebraska.gov) for consideration.*



## MAY CALENDAR

- 1 National Youth Safety Traffic Month
- 1 Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month
- 20 Start of 'Make It Click' Event
- 27 Memorial Day – NDOT Closed
- 30 Snow Rodeo

## SAFETY CORNER

### Parking Lot Safety: Drive Smart, Save Lives

Distractions like texting and speeding significantly contribute to parking lot accidents. With over 50% of drivers admitting to texting or social media use while driving in parking lots, and more than 60% programming GPS systems, the risks are evident. Moreover, 1 out of every 5 vehicle accidents and over 60,000 injuries occur in parking lots, highlighting the urgent need for safer driving practices.

The National Motorist Association advises speeds of 15 mph or less in parking lots, especially during peak times when pedestrian traffic is high. Speeding reduces reaction time and increases accident risks. Let's prioritize safety by putting down our phones, slowing down, and remaining vigilant for each other's safety. Together, we can enhance the safety of our NDOT parking lots and district yards.

# Celebrating the I-80 Six-Lane Expansion

On Monday, April 29, NDOT hosted a press event to celebrate the start of the I-80 six-lane expansion project from Lincoln to Pleasant Dale. This is the largest planned transportation project in the 2024 construction season.

Director Vicki Kramer, along with Governor Jim Pillen, Chris Hawkins of Hawkins Construction Company, and Senator Beau Ballard highlighted how NDOT's investment in the expansion of I-80 aims to reduce congestion, improve safety, and foster economic prosperity. The improved transportation network will also benefit local communities, making it easier for residents to access essential services, businesses, educational institutions, and recreational areas.

"Years of planning and investment have gotten us to today, where we continue our commitment to expanding I-80 west," shared Kramer.



(l-r): Nebraska State Patrol Captain Greg Miller; NDOT Director Vicki Kramer; Governor Jim Pillen; Senator Beau Ballard; Chris Hawkins, Hawkins Construction.

## Work Zone Awareness Week

In mid-April, NDOT along with the American General Contractors (AGC), hosted a press conference to recognize Work Zone Awareness Week (April 15-19, 2024). This press conference brought attention to the traveling public on the importance for motorists' awareness of workers present in active construction zones on Nebraska's highways. Drivers should be aware that most work zone crash fatalities are motorists and passengers. Since the 1940s, 53 NDOT workers have lost their lives in work zones and according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data shows 742 drivers and passengers died in work zones in 2022.

"The safety of NDOT's people and our fellow contractors who are out in work zones, as well as Nebraskans and our state's guests traveling through, is not a coincidence. Maintaining the quality of life, we have in Nebraska requires a lot of commitment, intention and cooperation," says Vicki Kramer, NDOT Director.



Cones honoring 53 NDOT workers were on display at a press conference held in April recognizing Work Zone Awareness Week.

## ELDT Training Program

In response to federal mandates for Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT), NDOT launched its own in-house CDL training program last year. Tired of long waitlists and sky-high costs associated with external training, NDOT recognized the need for a transformative solution. Since its launch, the program has trained 101 new CDL holders in 2023 alone, saving up to \$8-\$10K per trainee in tuition and travel expenses.

The program's flexibility means NDOT can adapt training sessions to fit the dynamic needs of its workforce and ongoing projects. Plus, employees are empowered to become certified ELDT trainers, backed by all the resources they need to achieve their goals.

### HR UPDATE

## Engineers' Licensing Exams

NDOT's engineers are required to pass the FE and/or PE exams to become licensed. Study materials, including exam preparation, online resources and practice exams are available through DOTSpot's [Engineers Resource Center](#). Full-time employees can submit the [License and Certification Reimbursement Form](#) for compensation of exam expenses, with requirements including two attempts, application fees, preparatory classes, and renewal fees.

Did you know NDOT can reimburse you up to \$2,000 for online prep courses or other materials? Purchase your course and submit for reimbursement or coordinate with your Training Liaison to avoid paying upfront.