

**The Faces of a TxDOT San Angelo District Work Zone**

*Veteran employees bring awareness to nationwide observance week of April 7-11*

Israel Ortegon, David Sanchez, and Jerry Stone all live and work in the 15-county San Angelo District of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). All have witnessed or been involved in near-miss incidents or fatalities in a work zone because of a distracted driver. Their stories are compelling and have been life-changing for each of them.

Israel Ortegon is the maintenance section supervisor of the Eden and Menard Maintenance Offices. He has lived in Eden his entire life and has a wife and three children. On July 3, 2007, he and another employee were working on the shoulder of the US 83 bridge as the road approaches Menard. A truck that was carrying a concrete slab had lost its load. Israel and his co-worker were at the scene with a loader pushing the slab off the main lanes. Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, a pickup truck with five people aboard veered right and hit the edge of the TxDOT sign trailer, swinging their truck parallel to the TxDOT dump truck which was connected to the sign trailer. Israel was struck down to the pavement by one of the passengers who was ejected from the pickup. He was knocked unconscious, face down on the grassy right of way. The pickup truck came to a rest just inches from Israel's body. "When the dust settled, I wasn't sure if it was the clouds of heaven or the smoke of hell"



**Israel Ortegon**

Israel said later, describing the horrific work zone crash that could have killed him. "Lots of people have life changing events like marriage, having children, or divorce, but this incident was my life changing event. When I realized that I still had two arms and two legs, I knew God had spared me that day," he added. "Today I always grab an extra hug from my wife and kids when I head off to work, because you just never know what may happen," Israel said.

David Sanchez, is a Construction Inspector for the Sutton County Area Office in Sonora. He has lived in Sonora his entire life and has three grown children. In his 28-year career with the department he has had two near misses. One was on US 277 in Val Verde County when he was flagging in a work zone and was nearly hit by truck. The other was on I 10, when he was working just three or four feet from the traffic when a driver came across the center line, passing through the



**David Sanchez**

barrels and plowing into the work zone.

David ran and was able to narrowly escape tragedy. He says drivers have more distractions now than they did years ago. "I witness people driving too fast, being aggressive, and not paying attention in work zones," David said. "I wish people would be more aware of signs and stay alert in work zones," he added.

Jerry Stone, is the Assistant Supervisor for Tom Green County Maintenance Office. He was born in Ackerly, Texas and now makes his home in San Angelo. He is married and has two young children. Since he began working for TxDOT in 2005, he has had two near misses and witnessed the fatality of a contract worker. It was in 2008, when he was working on US 87 near FM 2105, that he witnessed a fatality. Jerry and his



**Jerry Stone**

coworkers were inspecting a contractor who was placing stripes on the pavement when a pickup truck grazed a parked construction vehicle and hit the worker, killing him instantly. The pickup truck skidded about 100 feet before coming to a stop. "We are out there working hard every day in very dangerous situations, and I wish the public would have more respect for us," he said. "We all try to watch each other's back and be a support system for each other."

These three workers would like drivers to know that they are real people too, with families and people counting on them to come home safe. They would like to remind you to:

- Be aware of signs in work zones
- Look out for workers
- Slow down and focus on the

road

- Put down the cell phone
  - Be patient
- Since 1938, TxDOT has lost 272 employees in work zones:
- 103 killed by a distracted driver
  - 28 killed on the shoulder or right of way
  - 19 killed while flagging traffic

At any given time, there are over 2,000 active work zones on the 80,000 miles of roads that TxDOT maintains in Texas. In 2013, there were 17,000 crashes in work zones and 115 people died in those crashes. Although the national recognition of Work Zone Awareness Week is April 7-11, TxDOT believes that every week should be Work Zone Awareness Week.

Remember each of our workers is someone's mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter!

**Bible Baptist Church**

*New Permanent Location*

**Please join us to celebrate our new home at 9th and Austin in Robert Lee.**

**Sunday School at 10 am  
Sunday Worship at 11 am**



Texas Department of Transportation  
7785 E. SH 158 - Robert Lee

**Now Hiring!**

**General Transportation Tech I \$2520/mo**  
Entry level—no experience required.

**or General Transportation Tech II \$2650/mo**

Requires 1 year experience in heavy equipment operation, transportation-related or roadway maintenance.

**Closing date: 4/10/12 at 5:00 p.m.**

Must obtain Class A CDL with N endorsement within 60 days after hire date. May be contacted after hours to respond to emergencies, and must be able to report for duty within 45 minutes.

Applicants must submit a paper application found on our web site or available at any TxDOT office or on our web site: <http://txdot.gov/careers> (Can use the online system to apply for this position.) For additional information or to request an accommodation in order to apply for the above job, please contact Human Resources at 4502 Knickerbocker Rd. San Angelo TX 76904 or call 325/944-1501.

**An Equal Employment Opportunity / Affirmative Action Employer**

**Benefit Style Show**

**Benefitting the Food Ministry**

**Sunday • April 6 • 2 - 4 pm**

**Williams Building**

**117 W. Main • Bronte**



**Refreshments • Door Prizes**

**\$3 Donation**

*accepted at the door*

**Provided by Glorious Styles,**

**Fredricksburg**

**For More Information,**

**Call Donna Hall at (325) 450-7720.**