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NMDOT Prepares For Annual Pilgrimage To El Santuario De Chimayo

Santa Fe – New Mexico Department of Transportation District Five Engineer Miguel Gabaldon announced today that the Department’s maintenance crews have been preparing for safe walking areas along various New Mexico highways for the annual Good Friday Pilgrimage to the El Santuario de Chimayo (El Santuario). These efforts have included meeting with local emergency response personnel to prepare for this event and crews working over the past two weeks to prepare the various routes to El Santuario for pilgrims making the trek this year.

The Cuyamungue, Alcalde Maintenance Crews and District Three sweeping crew out of the Albuquerque DOT office completed sweeping operations along typical routes to El Santuario. They also conducted shoulder erosion repairs and debris and litter removal from the roadways to create safe walking areas for the pilgrims. Starting Thursday, April 2 through Good Friday, crews will continue to work around the clock to provide the various services as they have in previous years:

- Maintenance crews will begin setting up traffic control devices and pedestrian walking signs.
- There will be a right lane closure on US 84/285 between Jct. NM 599 and the S. Tesuque Interchange.
- Walkers will be guided to the on/off ramps at each interchange between Santa Fe and Cuyamungue.
- At the Cuyamungue Interchange, orange barrels and signage will guide the walkers away from the mainline and onto the east frontage road.
- Temporary stop signs will be placed at interchange locations to allow walkers to pass.
- All cattle guards along the routes will be covered

Additional signage and electronic message boards will be placed along parts of NM 76 and NM 503 to alert motorists of the high volume of pedestrians on the roadway. Portable light plants will be placed in the area of the Pojoaque Wellness Center and the intersections of NM 503 and CR 84; NM 503 and CR 98; NM 103 and NM 76 and on NM 76 mile marker 8 (Apple Shed) to provide additional lighting for those walking at night. There will also be trash receptacles along all traditional walking paths. NMDOT strongly reminds walkers to deposit their trash properly.

“People from all over the world participate in the pilgrimage to El Santuario every year, and the NMDOT wants to do our best to prepare the route for the safety of pilgrims and motorists alike,” said Miguel Gabaldon. “The NMDOT is working together with local, state, federal and tribal entities to provide a safe walking area, and we ask both walkers and motorists to be safe during this event.”

It is also suggested pedestrians wear light-colored clothing or reflective gear during early morning and evening hours. Law enforcement and emergency responders will patrol all areas of the pilgrimage to enhance overall safety of the event.

To further enhance the safety for this event, the Department has asked law enforcement agencies to assist in the enforcement of a state law that does not allow encroachments, including concession or roadside stands, along state highway right of way.

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