

Media Advisory

Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Media & Public Relations Division
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Media Advisory
May 25, 2012

Webbers Falls remembrance event to be held Memorial Day, Monday, May 28

In observance of the 10th anniversary of the Webbers Falls tragedy, a remembrance event will be held Monday, May 28 at the memorial in Webbers Falls. Speakers will begin at 10 a.m. and free hot dogs will be served at noon. Local artists will be playing music in the park. All are welcome. Those expected to attend are Principal Cherokee Chief Bill John Baker, Oklahoma Department of Transportation Division 1 Engineer Darren Saliba and many other local and state officials.

The memorial is located in the town of Webbers Falls, behind old City Hall. The entrance is at 101 River St. The memorial was dedicated May 26, 2003, a year to the day when 14 people lost their lives following an errant barge striking and collapsing the bridge over the Arkansas River.

The disaster on I-40 was a critical turning point for ODOT and a catalyst for renewed focus on transportation projects statewide. While the bridge itself was in good condition before being struck, the bridges on the detour routes were deteriorated and stressed under the additional loads which greatly emphasized the need to rebuild and/or repair the state's bridges. After decades of underfunding, increased resources from the state legislature have eventually allowed ODOT to address many of the worst bridges on the highway system, reducing the number of structurally deficient bridges from 1,200 in 2006 to 706 in 2011. In October 2011, Gov. Mary Fallin announced an initiative to repair or replace the state's remaining structurally deficient bridges by 2019, bringing Oklahoma from the worst bridge rating in the nation to the best. The legislation is moving smoothly through the session.

And since the incident, in an effort to better protect bridges along the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, multiple pier protection devices have been strategically installed to make bridge piers less vulnerable to a collision. There are now 70 steel-reinforced, concrete bridge pier protection columns installed along the waterway, including 23 columns guarding the I-40 bridge.

Sponsoring the event are former Mayor Jewell Horne Hall, Ashley Johnson, The Town of Webbers Falls, Love's, Poe & Associates of Oklahoma City, Millsap Funeral Services, Burger Barn, Charlie's Chicken, S.R.S. Incorporated, Sequoyah Fuels Corporation of Gore, Webbers Falls Historical Society, Bobby & Emily Ogg, Harps Grocery in Gore, Paul & Glenda Gould of AgraTech Flying Service and the Webbers Falls Chamber of Commerce.

For more information contact event organizer Jewell Horne Hall at 918-557-8029.

--www.okladot.state.ok.us--

(Editors and News Directors: For details out this event please contact Jewell Horne Hall at 918-557-8029. For any ODOT inquiries please call the ODOT Media & Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)