

**Welcome Remarks
Commissioner James S. Simpson
Joe Kealey Remembrance Ceremony
NJDOT Employee Memorial
July 22, 2010**

I would like to welcome everyone to this remembrance ceremony for our fallen colleague, Joe Kealey.

I am also honored to welcome members of Joe's family.

- His loving wife Pat.
- His daughters Jessica and Jaclyn.
- His sister Phyllis and his brother William.
- And his many cousins, nieces, nephews, god-children and friends.

I am also honored to welcome Joe's ESP colleagues and Major Heidi Scripture of the NJ State Police.

The NJ State Police face similar dangers on our highway system, as evidenced by the recent tragic loss of Troopers Mark Castellano and Scott Graham.

I also wish to extend a welcome and thank you to our Federal Highway Administration partners, Dennis Merida and John Miller.

We're here today to remember and honor Joe, who tragically lost his life on Monday, January 11, 2010 while assisting a motorist with a disabled vehicle on Route 76 in Bellmawr, NJ.

Joe was 45 years old and had been with NJDOT since June of 2006.

Joe is remembered for many things – a dedicated public servant, a true gentleman, a devoted father, and a friend to everyone he worked with.

Rare are the people on this earth with all of the qualities that Joe had, and blessed we all are for being able to know one.

Public service, which I view as the concept of working for the good of the community, was exemplified by Joe.

Public servants are dedicated to what they do.

- To them, it's not just work – it's their vocation.
- To some, it's not just their job – it is their life.
- It is a noble calling – putting others first.

I don't know how many people here know this, but during his relatively brief career here at DOT, Joe assisted over 3,000 motorists.

Yes, 3,000.

It is a further tribute to Joe that he received 825 written commendations from the motorists he helped.

Yes, 825 separate commendations.

Think about it – these are people whose lives were just briefly touched by Joe.

In those few moments of interaction, his kindness and his caring heart shone through.

The poet Robert Southey once said, “the sharper the sunbeam, the deeper the mark it leaves.”

In a way, Joe’s service was a bright sunbeam serving and protecting our customers, and it left the same indelible mark.

You don’t have to take my word for it – allow me to read a few of the commendations written about Joe.

- “Mr. Kealey treated me with dignity and put me at ease. I felt so much better. There should be more Mr. Kealey’s in the world.”
- “Joe was a gentleman, gracious and glad to help me in a tough spot. You should be proud he works for you.”
- “If every ESP representative is as good as Joe, your mission for excellent customer service is complete.”
- “I felt blessed when Joe arrived.”

- “Mr. Kealey made sure I remained safe at all times.”

And here are a few of the words used to describe Joe:

- *A hero.*
- *A guardian angel.*
- *An ambassador.*
- *A professional.*
- *A lifesaver.*

Aren't those wonderful words and commendations?

They are amazing – but to those who knew Joe, they are no surprise.

They describe the guy that Joe was, near and dear to our hearts.

He was indeed a precious gift – to those who loved him, to those who worked with him, to those he helped.

It is today, with a heavy heart, that we add Joe's name to our Employee Memorial.

He joins 35 other fallen colleagues whose names appear on our Memorial Wall.

There is an old saying that in tragedy, we can find purpose.

Let us all then re-dedicate our efforts to safety and vigilance, with a strong sense of purpose and commitment, so that the terrible loss of Joe is not in vain.

We can best honor his memory by making real strides in safety on our highways.

It is my solemn hope – indeed, the solemn hope of everyone here today – that Joe's name will be the last to be placed on the Memorial Wall.

Thank you, and may God Bless Joe, his family, and all of you here today to commemorate his life and work.