

The Chief

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City Highway Repairer Killed When Colleague Backs Truck Into Him

By DAVID SIMS

A veteran Highway Repairer was killed in an accident on the job May 15, crushed by a Department of Transportation truck that he was directing during late-night construction work on the Cross Island Parkway in Queens.

Errol Wilson, who was 59, had worked for DOT for 18 years. The driver of the truck reportedly lost sight of him in his rearview mirror while reversing and was not charged by police at the scene; the NYPD is conducting an investigation into the death.

'He's Going to Be Missed'

District Council 37 Local 376 President Gene DeMartino, his union leader, said in a phone interview, "His death is untimely and he's definitely going to be missed by his family and everyone he worked with." Mr. Wilson is survived by his wife Valerie, son Errol Jr. and daughter Tanya.

Mr. DeMartino added, "If it was a mistake by somebody else on the job, I don't know, I wasn't there to see it happen...everybody needs to be safe out there and be aware of their surroundings."

Local 376 Treasurer Thomas Kattou said that the union had attended a preliminary conference with the Public Employee Safety and Health Bureau and the DOT on the circumstances of the death.

"Night-time is a very dangerous place. This is the third person in our local in the past seven years that's been killed," he said. "We don't know what happened. They're going to investigate the safety setup and all the particulars of the situation."

He added, "I'm very upset because it just seems like these guys die in vain...It's one of the most dangerous jobs in the city, and I think that goes virtually unrecognized."

DOT: A Respected Veteran

"The accident is a tragic reminder that so many dedicated, unsung city workers take on dangerous assignments each and every day to ensure our city can run," Mayor Bloomberg said in a statement.

“As I said to [his wife] Valerie this morning, the thoughts and prayers of a grateful city are with her and all of Errol’s family and friends.”

DOT Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan said, “The entire department is devastated by Errol’s death. He was a respected veteran of the Roadway Repair and Maintenance Division, one of our best workers and a member of the DOT family. The news that we’ve lost Errol breaks our hearts.”

She continued, “Valerie and Errol Jr. told me how much their father loved his job. He brought his best to his work on New York’s streets and handled some of the most difficult assignments. City workers face danger every day, and today, we mourn the tragic loss of one of our best as we salute the commitment they all bring to our city. Errol will be sorely missed, and our hearts go out to all who were close to him.”