

Texas truckers fight human trafficking

By Austin Kemker **CONNECT** Posted: Mar 27, 2016 7:28 PM MDT Mar 27, 2016 7:28 PM MDT

Law enforcement will be getting extra eyes and ears on the road to fight human trafficking.

The Texas Attorney General's office is teaming up with the Texas Truck Driving Association to train drivers on what to look for and how to report it.

"Who better to effectively equip and empower to effectively report it (human trafficking)," said Esther Goetsch, coalition build specialist for Truckers Against Trafficking. "And what better state to saturate it than Texas, who consistently receives more calls and tips from truck drivers and others into the National Human Trafficking Hotline."

The Lone Star state is second in the nation for calls to the Human Trafficking Hotline. Houston has the second most victims in the country.

Truck driver Tom Swinney said he has seen girls and boy being trafficked over the years throughout the state.

"You see a lot around, like this truck stop you don't see it," Swinney said. "A couple of others, you'll see it. then you will see the girls out knocking on the doors and there will be some guy in a car over there just waiting."

Victims of trafficking can be from anywhere, including the Lubbock area.

"They bring some in from across the border, they bring some in from over seas," Swinney said. "And they get a lot of local girls, runaways and stuff like that. And boys too. For them it is a big business and if they can shut it down then shut it down. We don't need that."

Swinney said most truckers are for eliminating this crime and will report it if they see it.

John Esperaza, CEO of Texas Trucking Association said drivers are ready to keep the road safe.

"The trucking industry for years and years has been known as the knights of the road," Esperaza says. "I'd say going back to the times that my grandfather drove, this was a certain pride that a driver took out on the highways. They felt as protectors of the road and we are here today to state that it is not lost on us. That it is that time again for us to be the knights of the road again."

According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, Texas has more truck drivers reporting human trafficking incidents than any other state. This is in part due to the fact that I-10 and I-35 run through the state.

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