



# News from the Ohio Turnpike

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For Immediate Release:

**Everyone will be thankful when you arrive safely by paying attention behind the wheel**

*Turnpike and Ohio State Highway Patrol warn drivers against driving while distracted*

**BEREA** (Nov. 19, 2015) – The Ohio Turnpike says it will be a busy week of travel for the upcoming holiday period on the Ohio Turnpike with an estimated 195,000 vehicles on the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving.

In an effort to help ensure that travelers reach friends and family safely, the Ohio Turnpike and the Ohio State Highway Patrol are waging a campaign to urge customers to drive distraction-free and to move over or slow down for emergency vehicles with flashing lights.

As part of the campaign, the Turnpike will be distributing 100,000 pieces of literature to travelers at its 14 Service Plazas beginning on Monday, Nov. 23 until New Year's Day. The Ohio State Highway Patrol also will be handing them out during traffic stops.

"We are distributing information about distracted driving to holiday travelers and truck drivers," said Randy Cole, Executive Director of the Ohio Turnpike. "Texting behind the wheel is against the law for drivers of passenger vehicles and use of mobile phones is limited to hands-free operation for commercial drivers. Cell phone use of any kind is against the law for drivers under the age of 18."

In 2014, 17,827 crashes in Ohio (six percent of all crashes) had a reported distraction, including 44 fatal and 5,958 injury crashes. Use of a cell phone including texting behind the wheel was a factor in 16 percent of all distracted driving crashes, according to the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

"Distracted driving is any activity that diverts a person's attention away from the primary task of driving," said OSHP Staff Lt. William Weirtz. "This includes texting or using a mobile phone, using a navigation system while the vehicle is in motion, watching a video, adjusting a radio, eating and drinking, grooming and talking to passengers."

As part of the campaign, the Ohio Turnpike is also asking drivers to pledge to drive cell phone free. More than 2,500 *E-ZPass* customers have already taken the pledge and entered to win a \$50 Sunoco gift card at [www.ohioturnpike.org](http://www.ohioturnpike.org). In addition, the Turnpike and OSHP will be releasing a Public Service Video to media that also will be promoted on social media, on "Turnpike TV" at its service plazas and on its website. They're using the hashtag #CellFreeOHTPK on social media.

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**#OHTPK Thanksgiving Travel by the numbers:**

- The busiest day of Thanksgiving week on the Ohio Turnpike will be Wednesday (Nov. 25), with an estimated 195,000 vehicles on the 241-mile highway.
- Average daily traffic in 2015 year-to-date is approximately 147,000 vehicles.
- Customers will drive an estimated 13.5 million miles on Wednesday (Nov. 25), which is a 67 percent increase over the projected 2015 average daily vehicle miles traveled of 8.1 million miles.

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**For more information, please contact:**

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