



News from the Ohio Turnpike

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For Immediate Release:

Pay attention behind the wheel and arrive home safely for the holidays

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

BEREA (Dec. 21, 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 160,000 vehicles on the Wednesday prior to Christmas.

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

More than 6,000 Turnpike customers have already taken the pledge and entered to win a \$50 Sunoco gift card at www.ohioturnpike.org. They're using the hashtag #CellFreeOHTPK on social media.

The Turnpike also is distributing 100,000 pieces of literature to travelers at its 14 Service Plazas through New Year's Day and running a [Public Service Video](#)* on Turnpike TV at the 14 Service Plazas.

"We're 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 on all Ohio roadways 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."

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#OHTPK Christmas Travel by the numbers:

- The busiest day of Christmas week on the Ohio Turnpike will be Wednesday, Dec. 23, with an estimated 160,000 vehicles on the 241-mile highway.
- Average daily traffic in 2015 year-to-date is approximately 147,000 vehicles.
- Customers will drive an estimated 10 million miles on Dec. 23, which is a 23 percent increase over the projected 2015 average daily vehicle miles traveled of 8.1 million miles.

*NOTE: Media outlets are welcome and encouraged to link to a 1:00 video, "[Distracted Driving: The Consequences Can be Devastating](#)," featuring Ohio Turnpike Executive Director Randy Cole and Ohio State Highway Patrol Lieutenant Richard Reeder.

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