



Ohio State Highway Patrol and Ohio Turnpike Urge All Motorists to be Self-Aware of Unsafe Driving Behaviors Behind the Wheel

BEREA, Ohio (Feb. 7, 2025) – The Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) and the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission (OTIC) are working together to reduce crashes and curb unsafe driving behaviors behind the wheel.

On Jan. 31, 2025, at the Toledo Auto Show, the OSHP and the OTIC announced traffic safety initiatives for 2025 to promote roadway safety for drivers of passenger and commercial vehicles on the 241-mile Ohio Turnpike (Interstate 80, I-90, and I-76), which traverses through 13 counties across northern Ohio.

"The motoring public can expect to see troopers conducting high-visibility patrols on the turnpike through the rest of 2025, focusing on distracted driving, speed enforcement and safety belt usage," said Lt. Erica Gockstetter, during remarks at the auto show. "But we cannot just enforce our way to a safer Ohio Turnpike. To truly create the safest driving environment, we need a commitment from motorists to drive in ways that are responsible and safe."

Lt. Gockstetter added that the commitment also extends to how drivers of passenger vehicles interact with commercial trucks on the roadway.

"We want to remind the motoring public to use caution around commercial vehicles. Avoid the no-zone by staying out of the blind areas in the front, back and sides of these vehicles. Do not cut in front of a commercial vehicle, as they require more stopping distance than a passenger vehicle," Lt. Gockstetter added. "We equally ask commercial drivers to drive alert, follow the hours-of-service regulations, and be attentive to blind spots when changing lanes. Additionally, driving appropriately for road or weather conditions is crucial."

Over a five-year period (2020-2024) on the Ohio Turnpike, there were 3,810 speed-related crashes, where 18 people lost their lives and 1,514 people were injured; 326 crashes where a distraction was a contributing factor, causing one fatality and 141 injuries; and there were 29 fatalities where a safety belt was available, but not in use.

"Simple things like driving the posted speed limit, not sending a text message while driving, and ensuring everyone in the vehicle is wearing their safety belt, are all ways that will instantly enhance safety," said Lt. Gockstetter.

Chris Matta, chief engineer/deputy executive director of the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission, called on all drivers of passenger vehicles and commercial trucks – to be self-aware of unsafe behaviors behind the wheel – such as aggressive and distracted driving – to reduce crashes and prevent injuries and fatalities on the Ohio Turnpike and elsewhere.

“Unsafe driving behaviors, which are easily identified and preventable, include speeding; distracted, impaired, aggressive, and drowsy driving; following too closely; not wearing a seat belt; failing to obey traffic signs and signals; and driving an unsafe vehicle,” Matta said.

The top crash factors (based on OSHP statistical data) for both drivers of passenger vehicles and commercial trucks include:

- Driving at an unsafe speed;
- Driving off the road;
- Improper lane changes;
- Following too closely; and
- Failure to yield the right of way.

“Drivers of passenger vehicles should pay particular attention when driving near commercial vehicles and buses, which have many blind spots, less maneuverability, and require longer distances to slow down and stop,” Matta added.

Commercial vehicles account for about 25% of traffic on the Ohio Turnpike.

The American Trucking Associations’ Share the Road campaign recommends that drivers of passenger vehicles:

- Never cut in front of a truck;
- Do not linger alongside a truck;
- Pass safely and quickly to resume visibility;
- Steer clear of front and rear blind spots;
- If you are following a truck and you cannot see the driver’s face in the truck’s side mirrors, the truck driver cannot see you; and
- Allow trucks adequate space to maneuver.

The OSHP, the law enforcement agency on the Ohio Turnpike, has three posts stationed along the 241-mile toll road.

The public is encouraged to safely dial #677 to report dangerous or impaired drivers, as well as drug activity.

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