

NEWS RELEASE



Ohio State Highway Patrol and Ohio Turnpike Encourage Motorists and Truck Drivers to Practice Safe Driving Behaviors Behind the Wheel

CLEVELAND (Feb. 20, 2026) – The Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission are teaming up to encourage safe driving behaviors behind the wheel.

Today at the Cleveland Auto Show, the Patrol and Turnpike Commission drove home their areas of emphasis for 2026 to promote roadway safety for passenger and commercial vehicles on the 241-mile Ohio Turnpike (I-80, I-90, and I-76) and beyond.

“Our troopers, our partners at the Turnpike and first responders regularly encounter the aftermath of a poor choice that is made while behind the wheel,” said Staff Lt. Rick Reeder, Ohio State Highway Patrol. “These poor choices leave lasting impacts on families and communities, and many of them could have been avoided.”

For the fourth year in a row, Ohio has seen a decrease in the total number of fatal crashes statewide — including 37 fewer lives lost in 2025 compared to the year before. Last year, 10 fatalities occurred on the Ohio Turnpike, marking the lowest number of lives lost in the last five years.

This progress reflects the impact of proactive enforcement and safer driving choices, and Patrol and the Turnpike Commission are committed to continuing this momentum by encouraging safe driving behaviors.

From 2021 through 2025 on the Ohio Turnpike, there were:

- 4,061 speed-related crashes, resulting in 16 fatalities and 1,094 injuries;
- 304 crashes where a distraction played a role, causing one death and injuring 143 others; and
- 32 fatalities in which a safety belt was available but not used.

“As you can see, in too many instances, these senseless and preventable tragedies resulted from something that was preventable,” Staff Lt. Reeder added.

As a result, motorists can expect to see state troopers conducting high-visibility patrols on the Ohio Turnpike throughout 2026 – encouraging safe driving behaviors. Troopers will focus on violations that put the motoring public needlessly at risk. These violations include distracted driving, speeding and not wearing a safety belt.

Ohio Turnpike Chief Engineer Chris Matta urged drivers of passenger and commercial vehicles not to rely too heavily on technology features in today’s vehicles.

“Innovations like forward collision warning, adaptive cruise control, and blind spot warnings are impressive and helpful, yet they’re not a substitute for safe driving behaviors and letting your guard down,” said Matta, who also serves as deputy executive director of the Turnpike Commission.

“Improving safety isn’t a switch we flip overnight. It’s ongoing work — through education, enforcement, outreach, and most importantly, personal responsibility,” added Matta.

Over the past five years, more than 6,000 lives have been lost on Ohio’s roadways.

According to data from the Highway Patrol, the top crash factors — for both passenger vehicles and commercial trucks — are the same and include:

- Unsafe speed;
- Improper lane changes;
- Following too closely; and
- Failure to yield.

In 2025 alone, more than 56 million cars and trucks traveled 3 billion miles on the Ohio Turnpike — and that number isn’t slowing down.

Providing safe, efficient transportation must take into account how car drivers share the road with commercial drivers, who make up about 25% of traffic on the Ohio Turnpike.

Commercial trucks and buses have larger blind spots, less maneuverability, and need much more distance to stop. The American Trucking Associations’ Share the Road campaign reminds passenger vehicle drivers to:

- Never cut in front of a truck;
- Don’t linger alongside a truck;
- Pass safely and promptly;
- Stay clear of blind spots;
- Remember: if you can’t see the driver’s face in the side mirror, they can’t see you; and
- Give trucks room to maneuver.

Winter driving is another challenge for both motorists, commercial truck drivers, and Ohio Turnpike snowplow truck operators. “This has already been a challenging winter,” said Matta. “Snowplow trucks are not obstacles. They are making our roadway safer. Please give them plenty of room to work.”

The public is encouraged to safely dial #677 to report reckless or impaired drivers and drug activity.

Contact:

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PHOTOS ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.