

# MEDIA RELEASE



For Immediate Release: February 2, 2024

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## **Ohio State Highway Patrol and Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission announce turnpike traffic safety initiatives for 2024**

**TOLEDO** - The Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) and the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission (OTIC) are collaborating to reduce fatal and injury crashes, and curb dangerous driving behaviors on the Ohio Turnpike.

Today, the OSHP and the OTIC announced traffic safety initiatives for 2024 to improve roadway safety along the 241-mile Ohio Turnpike (Interstate 80, Interstate 90 and Interstate 76), which traverses through 13 counties across northern Ohio.

These initiatives include plans for high-visibility patrols where troopers will be focusing on distracted driving violations, speed enforcement and safety belt usage. These initiatives are aimed at areas where troopers can have the biggest impact on changing driving behaviors to make the turnpike, and all of our state's roadways, safer for everyone.

"Far too often, our troopers, our partners at the turnpike and first responders see the tragedies that occur on our roadways," said Ohio State Highway Patrol Sergeant Ryan E. Purpura. "Many of these tragedies are preventable and ultimately result in loss of life or injury to others. Our partnership with the Ohio Turnpike is an example of how we can make our roadways safer for those who live, work and travel through our state."

From 2019 through 2023, on the Ohio Turnpike, there were 3,800 speed-related crashes, where 16 people lost their lives and 1,518 people were injured; 348 crashes where a distraction was a contributing factor, causing one life to be lost and injuring 148 others; and there were 20 fatalities where a safety belt was available, but not in use.

The OTIC also highlighted a few of its year-round safety campaigns, which include Move Over, Slow Down and Work Zone Awareness.

Chris Matta, chief engineer of the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission, called on motorists to be self-aware of dangerous behaviors behind the wheel – such as aggressive and distracted driving – to reduce crashes and prevent injuries and fatalities on the 241-mile toll road and elsewhere.

"Improving roadway safety is a shared responsibility, and changing driver behavior will not happen overnight. It will be an ongoing effort requiring years of hard work on all fronts," said Matta, in remarks

today at the 2024 Toledo Auto Show. “But that hard work will be worth it when we consider the thousands of lives lost each year on our state’s roadways.”

To combat distracted driving, Ohio’s phone down while driving law became enforceable with fines in October 2023.

According to the Ohio State Highway Patrol, speeding, driving off the road, improper lane changes, failing to maintain a safe following distance, and failure to yield the right of way are the top causes of vehicle crashes on the Ohio Turnpike. Speeding accounts for nearly 35% of the crashes on the Ohio Turnpike.

Regarding improvements to the Ohio Turnpike’s infrastructure, Matta said the commission will continue to fund projects that maintain the safety of its roadways, bridges, lighting, and signage as well as fund new projects, such as overhead message boards, variable speed limit signs, camera systems, and reflective pavement markings to improve roadway visibility at night and during wet conditions.

“By eliminating dangerous driving behaviors, most vehicle crashes are preventable,” Matta added. “Together, with our law enforcement and community partners, we are encouraging safe driving habits to prevent crashes year-round on the Ohio Turnpike and all roadways.”

With the start of the roadway construction season scheduled to begin in early April, Matta also urged motorists to be attentive when driving through construction work zones, and “move over, slow down” for all stationary vehicles with flashing lights on the side of all highways in the state.

“Dangerous driving behaviors on the highway also put our maintenance crews and roadway construction workers at severe risk in work zones,” Matta added. “Everyone plays a role in work zone safety.”

You can help contribute to roadway safety by calling 911 or #677 when you see unsafe motorists driving on Ohio roadways.

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