



## *News from the Ohio Turnpike*

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**For Immediate Release:**

### **Turnpike dedicates Memorial Signs in memory of fallen workers, tow operators**

*The signs will serve as a reminder for motorists to Move Over for emergency vehicles*

**BEREA (Sept. 21, 2018)** – The Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission today dedicated three Ohio Turnpike Memorial Signs in honor of five men from northwest Ohio.

The Commission honored two maintenance employees from the Castalia Maintenance Building, Kenneth C. Bailey, of Bellevue, and Berton C. Stewart, of Monroeville. The men were killed on Sept. 17, 1970 in the same incident in a work zone east of Exit 91 on the Ohio Turnpike.

The Commission also dedicated Memorial Signs in honor of David R. Lescher, Frank Protzman, Jr. and Jeff Hotz, three tow truck operators who were killed in this same region in 1995, 2002 and 2003, respectively.

Bailey was only 19 years old when he was struck and killed (by a semi-tractor trailer) while at work for the Commission. He and Berton Stewart, age 44, were both killed.

Likewise, Oct. 20, 2003 is forever etched in the memories of the Hotz family. Hotz, a mechanic from Fremont, was only 40 years old when he was hit and killed by a car whose driver was reportedly asleep at the wheel. Hotz was stopped on the turnpike to repair a disabled truck when he was hit.

About one year earlier, on Aug. 30, 2002, Protzman Jr. (of Sandusky), a 34-year-old tow truck operator for Charlie's Towing, was assisting a woman whose minivan had become disabled on the shoulder. Meanwhile, a semi driver failed to move over and he struck Protzman, Jr., of Sandusky, as he stood beside his wrecker.

A similar incident took the life of David R. Lescher (of Norwalk), a tow truck operator from McCoy's. Lescher, who was 30, was killed on Oct. 13, 1995 when a semi went off the road and slammed Lescher's wrecker into a ditch less than a mile from where Hotz was killed.

The Memorial Sign Program is part of the turnpike's Work Zone Awareness Campaign and its efforts to remind motorists to move over for vehicles with flashing lights.

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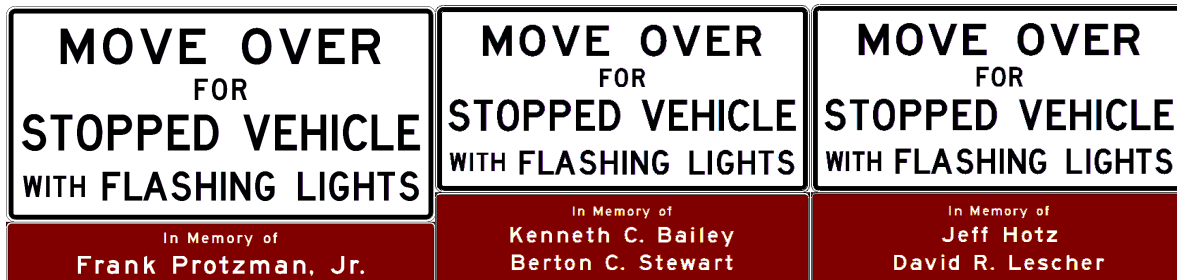
Participants at the ceremony dedicated the sign in memory of the four men. Representing the Ohio Turnpike was Randy Cole, Executive Director. Lt. Rick Reeder represented the Ohio State Highway Patrol. Family members from three of the families attended. Immediate family members each received a replica sign presented by Cole.

“We continue our efforts to prevent this type of tragedy from occurring ever again on the Ohio Turnpike,” said Randy Cole, Executive Director. “In fact, by working closely with our partners at the Ohio State Highway Patrol on education and enforcement, there were no fatalities in turnpike work zones in 2017.”

The OSHP and Ohio Turnpike teamed up in 2017 to conduct and publicize aerial speed enforcement in and near work zones and is doing so again in 2018. Because of these efforts, together, the Patrol and Commission saw a 21.5 percent decrease in the number of traffic crashes in work zones in 2017 (from 349 to 274).

This campaign also led to a 44 percent decrease in the number of injury crashes (from 84 to 51). Most importantly, there were no fatal crashes in work zones in 2017.

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