



## News from the Ohio Turnpike

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **Roadside workers plead with drivers to keep them safe**

*Family members also ask for motorists to do the right thing*

**BEREA (Oct. 13, 2021)** — Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, AAA, the Ohio Turnpike, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), the Ohio State Highway Patrol, and The Risk Institute are recognizing Move-Over Day, Saturday, Oct. 16, by reminding Ohio drivers to move over and slow down for any vehicle with flashing lights parked on the roadside.

This effort is part of a larger multi-agency campaign that includes social media messaging every Monday with the hashtags #MoveOverMonday and #MoveOverOhio. *(Local contacts, named at the bottom of this release, are available for interviews.)*

#### **Crash Data:**

According to a new crash analysis from ODOT, 546 crashes have occurred so far in 2021 when drivers failed to move over or slow down for a stationary vehicle with flashing lights. This has caused 21 deaths and 59 serious injuries. Between 2015 and 2020 a total of 5,561 move over-related crashes occurred in Ohio.

“It’s alarming to see the rise of crashes happening throughout our state,” said Governor Mike DeWine. “It’s critically important that all drivers remember to avoid distractions, pay attention, and stay focused on the road.”

The death of a AAA tow provider, Glenn Ewing, 32, highlights how dangerous it is for individuals who work regularly along the shoulders of Ohio’s roads. Ewing was killed while placing a disabled vehicle on the back of a flatbed near Cincinnati on July 4, 2021.

“The men and women who work on our roads have a simple request for drivers: ‘Help us get home safe at the end of the day.’ Moving over and slowing down allows them to do that,” said ODOT Director Jack Marchbanks.

#### **Lack of Understanding Among Drivers:**

A survey conducted by The Ohio State University found gaps in Ohioans’ knowledge of the state’s Move Over law, especially when it comes to construction crews and tow trucks.

“Survey data shows that many Ohioans still don’t move over for tow truck operators, construction vehicles or disabled vehicles,” said Executive Director Ferzan M. Ahmed, P.E., Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission. “Since 2015, two tow truck operators have been killed on the Ohio Turnpike. Their families will have to bear the loss of their loved ones for the rest of their lives. People have the responsibility to obey the law in order to keep all roadside workers and motorists safe from injury and death.”

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have a [Move Over law](#) to protect individuals on the roadside. Ohio's law requires all drivers to move over and slow down for any vehicle parked on the side of the road with flashing lights, no matter the color of the lights or the number of lanes.

Startling new data from the [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#) finds:

- Nearly a quarter (23%) of drivers are unaware of their state's Move Over law.
- In addition, 42% of drivers who do not comply with Move Over laws at all times said they thought their behavior was somewhat or not dangerous at all to roadside emergency workers.

"The recent AAA Foundation data demonstrates that drivers may not realize how risky it is for those working or stranded along highways and roads close to moving traffic," said Kimberly Schwind with the Ohio Conference of AAA Clubs.

#### **Enforcement and Education are Key:**

Those who do not comply with Ohio's Move Over Law are subject to charges and fines. The law is strictly enforced. In fact, in 2020, the Ohio State Highway Patrol issued 7,829 citations for those failing to move over or slow down. So far this year, there have been 3,576 citations issued.

"Moving over or slowing down for stationary vehicles with flashing lights isn't just the law; it's the right thing to do," said Colonel Richard S. Fambro of the Ohio State Highway Patrol. "By motorists making this a standard practice, we can make Ohio safer for everyone working along our roadways."

Law enforcement is not immune to the consequences of not moving over. On Sept. 4, 2021 a vehicle struck Sergeant Fernando Chavez' Ohio State Highway Patrol car while he was completing a traffic stop on the shoulder of U.S. Route 24 in Defiance County. Sergeant Chavez sustained non-life-threatening injuries, but the passenger in the vehicle that struck him died, and the driver sustained life-threatening injuries.

"The Risk Institute stands with other organizations in support of efforts in Ohio and nationally to raise awareness to Move Over Laws and creating a one lane buffer for all emergency response and service vehicles stopped on our highways," said Phil Renaud, executive director of The Risk Institute. "Please protect our Public Safety and Emergency Response workers."

Videos and campaign materials are available for download [MoveOver.Ohio.gov](#).

#### **LOCAL CONTACTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS:**

##### **Northeast Ohio/Greater Cleveland/Akron**

**Holly Colman**, daughter of Michael Kennedy, Tow Truck Operator

She resides in Deerfield Township, Portage County

Holly's father, Michael "Turnpike Mike" Kennedy, lost his life in performance of his duties on the Ohio Turnpike on May 11 of 2015. He was hit by a semi tractor-trailer while assisting a motorist with a flat tire.

##### **Northwest Ohio/Toledo area**

**Nathan Overmyer**, Ohio Turnpike Maintenance Worker, Elmore Maintenance Building

Nate Overmyer was part of an Ohio Turnpike Elmore Maintenance Crew on Jan. 24, 2012, when a wayward tractor-trailer crashed into their work zone near Fremont and killed John Fletcher, 53, of Perrysburg. John was an assistant foreman, husband and father. Two co-workers also were seriously injured.

**TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS, CONTACT:** Brian Newbacher, Public Information Officer, Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission, 440-821-3399, [brian.newbacher@ohioturnpike.org](mailto:brian.newbacher@ohioturnpike.org)

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