



News from the Ohio Turnpike

682 Prospect St.
Berea, OH 44017
www.ohioturnpike.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Everyone Plays a Role in Work Zone Safety

By Ferzan Ahmed
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This year, the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission is investing up to \$233 million on toll road modernization, pavement replacement, resurfacing, bridge, and other projects.

The modernization of the toll collection system is the largest capital improvement project in our history since the years leading up to the turnpike's completion in 1955.

With the construction season underway, raising awareness of work zone safety along the 241-mile Ohio Turnpike on behalf of our roadway crews, contractors and turnpike customers is a top priority.

We are urging motorists to drive safely in-and-around work zones by establishing a safe following distance, maintaining the work zone speed limit, avoiding distractions, paying attention to signs, and being prepared to slow down or stop.

There were 1,224 crashes in work zones on the turnpike causing numerous injuries and property damage from 2017-2021, an average of 245 crashes per year over, according to the Ohio Department of Public Safety.

Speeding in work zones is a primary cause of crashes. The Ohio State Highway Patrol will be conducting speed enforcement, including aerial enforcement, in work zones on the turnpike during the construction season.

Last week, we joined with U.S. and state transportation and safety agencies to promote National Work Zone Awareness Week (April 11-15), an annual spring campaign held at the start of the construction season to encourage safe driving in highway work zones. The campaign's message to motorists: *Work Zones Are a Sign to Slow Down.*

As part of our campaign, we installed permanent signs, *Move Over Slow Down for All Vehicles with Flashing Lights*, on the ramps at all 14 service plazas to remind motorists of Ohio's *Move Over* law, which requires drivers to move over and slow down for all stationary vehicles with flashing lights – including road construction and maintenance vehicles – on the side of all roadways and highways in the state. Fines are doubled for failing to comply with the law.

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In addition, to reach visitors at the service plazas, our maintenance sign shop created a stencil by hand that was used to paint the *Move Over Slow Down* message on the main sidewalks using orange, high-visible marking paint. It was the centerpiece for the creation of two videos distributed to our social/digital media audience. Reflective *Move Over Slow Down* stickers were created and placed on the hard hats worn by our maintenance workers at eight facilities.

Our administration building staff participated in the campaign's Go Orange Day by wearing orange-colored clothing to raise awareness of work zone safety, recognize roadway workers, and remember individuals who lost their lives in work zone accidents.

During the week, we also illuminated our administration building, which is visible from the turnpike, with orange-colored spotlights to show our support for the campaign.

The month of April, which typically kicks off the highway construction season, serves as a reminder that everyone plays a role in work zone safety all year long.

Ahmed is the executive director of the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission in Berea, Ohio. He is a registered Professional Engineer in Civil Engineering.

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For more information, contact:

Charles Cyrill
Public Information Officer
Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission
m: 440.821.3399
charles.cyrill@ohioturnpike.org