

## MOVE OVER LAW

From the City of Grand Prairie Police Department's [Facebook](#) page, June 18, 2015 at 6:17pm:

Today, we were blessed. One of our traffic officers had just made a traffic stop on a speeding motorist on IH-30 WB near Belt Line Road. The officer was standing outside of his police car when he was suddenly struck from behind by another motorist. The crashed police car slammed into the officer, causing minor injuries. Thankfully, a passerby on a sport motorcycle stopped to help our officer by taking off his bandana and wrapping the officer's arm in it, stopping the bleeding. The officer was transported to a hospital where he was later released with some cuts, bumps, and bruises. The driver that was initially stopped was also taken to a hospital and is expected to recover. Thank you to those who reached out to us with your thoughts and prayers!

Please remember Texas Transportation Code 545.157 requires drivers nearing stopped emergency vehicles-with lights activated to either slow down or change lanes. The law states a driver must either vacate the lane closest to the stopped emergency vehicle if the road has multiple lanes traveling in the same direction or slow down 20 miles per hour below the speed limit. (If the speed limit is below 25 mph, the driver must slow down to 5 mph.) #MoveOver



According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), being struck and killed by a vehicle while outside of the patrol vehicle is the second leading cause of traffic-related line-of-duty deaths, topped only by automobile crashes. And, according to Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) data, an average of one officer a month was struck and killed over a seventeen year period from 1993-2009. Keep in mind, these statistics only take law enforcement incidents into account; what about the other firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and other first responders? Add these in and those numbers grow exponentially.

Thankfully, 49 of the 50 states have "Move Over" laws to help combat these frightening statistics. But, how well do they work? Researchers believe that most drivers will inherently follow rules, but, issues arise that keep them from doing so, including heavy traffic, high speed, impairment, and distractions, much of which can be controlled by the driver. But, since law enforcement can only do so much to help control these issues, it is incumbent upon all drivers and emergency personnel to take charge and make a plan to do everything in their power to avoid collisions like this.

In an effort to help combat incidents on highways, many agencies across the country have also begun encouraging drivers being stopped to exit the freeway and stop on the access/feeder road or a side street to eliminate the need to stop on the highway. Public education and awareness on these efforts are necessary to ensure drivers are not only aware of the dangers of stopping in high-speed traffic, but also the officers' desire for them to get to a safe place before stopping.

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund has developed a campaign to help decrease officer fatalities on the road. The campaign includes a pledge for drivers, ten easy steps to keep officers safe on the road, and other helpful resources. For more information visit <http://www.nleomf.org/programs/drive>.

In addition, several reminders have also been developed to assist emergency personnel of their roles and responsibilities with regard to highway safety. The Emergency Responder Safety Institute's (ERSI) Ten Cones of Highway Safety is a great starting point for all responders.

1. There is no substitute for training.
2. Multi-agency coordination and communication are a must. Unified command, jointly developed SOPs, and ongoing communication and review are essential.
3. Limit your exposure and time. Responders should work as quickly as is prudent and safe.
4. Give traffic plenty of warning. Use arrow boards, flares, orange cones, and detour signs whenever possible to alert drivers of your presence.
5. Protect the scene with on-site equipment. Position vehicles and heavy equipment to safeguard all personnel.
6. Always work away from traffic and be aware of the traffic flow.
7. Be prepared to shut down the roadway. Shutdowns are unpopular options as they create a domino effect on other roadways especially residential areas. Designating preplanned detour routes may help ease congestion.
8. Be seen and not hurt. Flashing vehicle lights can obscure responders and temporarily blind drivers. Better options might include illuminating the entire scene and/or using arrow boards and reflective equipment and clothing.
9. Dress for the occasion. Comfortable, reflective, or fluorescent gear is essential.
10. Accountability matters. Each responder must do their best to ensure the team's safety. Consider assigning one person the role of safety officer to coordinate emergency scene safety.

Preventing similar incidents requires a combined effort of both emergency personnel and drivers. Do your part to help prevent injuries, fatalities, and damage by remaining alert at all times and never becoming complacent in any situation.

### Resources

- <http://www.nleomf.org/programs/drive/>
- <http://www.moveoverlaws.com/>
- <http://www.moveoveramerica.com/>
- <http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/traffic/safety/move-over-slow-down.html>

### References

- [http://www.policemagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article\\_id=2422&issue\\_id=72011#4](http://www.policemagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article_id=2422&issue_id=72011#4)
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