



## OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **ODOT WORKS TO ‘PUT THE BRAKES ON FATALITIES’**

(COLUMBUS) - Each year on Ohio roadways there are nearly 380,000 crashes – about 1,400 people are killed and 190,000 people are injured. The vast majority of these crashes are preventable.

This year the Ohio Department of Transportation is joining the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers and other organizations in encouraging Ohioans to adopt safer driving practices to reduce deaths and injuries. These groups are highlighting driver safety nationwide as part of “Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day,” which is being observed on October 10.

#### **Ohio Fatalities Drop**

In 2003, Ohio saw the second largest decrease in fatalities nationwide. Fatalities dropped by 10 percent from 1,417 in 2002 to 1,276 last year. State officials attribute the decrease to better engineering, enforcement and advancements in vehicle technology.

“Over the past decade we’ve made great strides in improving the roadways and the vehicles we drive,” said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor. “However, engineering is only one part of the equation. How we drive as motorists is just as important in reducing fatalities and crashes.”

In 2003, about 90 percent of fatal crashes and 88 percent of injury crashes were classified as driver error, according to Ohio Department of Public Safety statistics. Common causes were excessive speed, driver inattention and alcohol.

#### **New Programs Underway**

ODOT is working to prevent injuries and fatalities through the department’s Highway Safety Program. In 2003, ODOT doubled the amount of funding available to address high-crash locations from \$35 to \$65 million annually.

In addition, ODOT announced this week that it will expand its OhioSafe Commute Program, which is underway in Columbus, to include Interstate 71 in Cincinnati and Interstate 480 in Cleveland (<http://www.dot.state.oh.us/ohiosafecommuter/>).

OhioSafe Commute stations law enforcement officers along the busiest, crash-prone highways. Officers patrol these corridors to enforce the speed limit and clear roadway crashes faster to reduce annual crashes and save lives.

Money to fund the initiative comes from ODOT’s highway safety program, which has invested about \$500,000 in the enforcement effort. The next phase of the program, which will run from October 12 to December 11, will cost about \$272,000. With continued success, OhioSafe Commute could be expanded to other areas of the state next year.