



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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NEW SIGNS TO SAVE LIVES, REDUCE FREEWAY CONGESTION

(COLUMBUS) — For 911 operators throughout the state, helping accident victims can be frustrating.

“Many people who call for assistance can’t accurately identify their location so we can send help quickly,” said Mel Meloy, president of the National Emergency Numbers Association. “In some cases, the delay can be life-threatening.”

But a new statewide program being launched by the Ohio Department of Transportation this spring will aid motorists — saving lives and reducing congestion in the process.

ODOT will post about 10,000 Freeway Reference Markers along 700 miles of freeway and ramps in the most congested areas of the state. *In Columbus, signs are being posted along portions of Interstate 70, 71, 270, 670 and state Route 104 and 315.*

The 48-by-14-inch signs are designed to help motorists pinpoint their location in an emergency. The blue and white signs include the route, direction of travel, and milepost number within two-tenths of a mile. During an incident, 911 dispatchers ask motorists to read the sign from top to bottom so they can dispatch emergency crews accurately and fast. The signs can also be used by AAA, and other businesses and organizations to respond to service calls along the highway.

“More than 50 percent of all congestion is caused by unexpected incidents, such as highway accidents and spills,” *said Jack Marchbanks, ODOT deputy director for central Ohio.* “If we can find better ways to detect and clear these incidents, we can keep traffic moving and reduce the number of crashes on our freeways.”

Studies have shown that each traffic accident on the freeway increases the potential for an additional crash by at least 600 percent.

Ohio was the first state in the nation to use the locator signs and the first to expand their use statewide. The expanded program will cost about \$800,000. The signs have been used successfully in the Cincinnati area since 1995.

Marchbanks said Freeway Reference Markers are part of a larger statewide strategy to reduce accidents and congestion on Ohio highways. Crash statistics show that about 42 percent of all freeway crashes occur on just 12 percent of the freeway system.

“ODOT is targeting these locations using a variety of means including freeway service patrols and new traffic management technology, which uses pavement sensors, cameras, signs and ramp meters,” he said. “This summer we’re also looking at low-cost, short-term engineering solutions that can reduce crashes at these locations while we develop longer-term reconstruction projects.”

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