

# WisDOT: Move over, slow down to keep emergency roadside workers safe

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Wisconsin's emergency responders work tirelessly to save lives and keep our highways safe, responding to approximately 134,700 traffic crashes in Wisconsin every year. Governor Tony Evers proclaimed November 14-18, 2022 as Crash Responder Safety Week and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) reminds motorists to always practice safe driving habits and protect emergency roadside workers.

A crash occurs about every four minutes in Wisconsin. First responders often work just feet away from traffic and put their lives in danger every time they respond to a crash. Since 2017, more than 350 first responders have been injured while working inside their emergency vehicle or at the scene of a crash.

"Thousands of women and men throughout Wisconsin dedicate their lives and careers to our safety as first responders," WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson said. "We play an active role to keep them safe when traveling on Wisconsin roadways. Two simple steps: move over or slow down, can make a big difference in everyone's safety."

Wisconsin's Move Over Law has been in effect since 2001. The law requires drivers to shift lanes or slow down in order to provide a "safety zone" for a squad car, ambulance, fire truck, tow truck, utility vehicle, or highway maintenance vehicle that is stopped on the side of a road with its warning lights flashing.

In December 2021, Governor Evers signed Act 115 into law, expanding protections by banning cell phone use in an emergency response area and creating new

penalties for drivers who injure or kill a worker on the side of the road. The law defines an emergency or roadside response area as the section of road within 500 feet of an authorized emergency vehicle with a visible signal, or a tow truck with flashing red lights. Emergency responder safety is also [Wisconsin State Patrol's November Law of the Month](#) which educates drivers on the importance of protecting first responders on the roads.

Wisconsin is a national leader in Traffic Incident Management (TIM) training. The training brings together first responders (i.e., law enforcement, fire, EMS, public works, and towing services) for consistent training on crash scene management. The training focuses on safety and effectiveness in managing roadside incidents, while standardizing operations and communication across agencies. There are nearly 40,000 responders statewide and almost 50% have received the TIM training.

“We know everyone values getting to their destinations safely,” Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. “For those of us who wake up every day and put on a uniform to serve our community, we need to make it to an emergency scene safely and effectively. That’s why it’s so important for all drivers to eliminate distractions and, when possible, provide additional space for us to work.”

### **Help protect our roadside heroes**

- Move over or slow down when passing by an incident scene to provide a protective buffer for responders and the motorists behind you.
- If you can [“Steer It, Clear It”](#). Many drivers think they should not move their car if they are involved in a fender bender or crash. If (and only if) your car is drivable and there are no injuries, you should move your car to the shoulder or nearby safe place off of the road before calling 911.
- Plan ahead. Know before you go with [511wi.gov](#) for updates on road conditions and incidents.

This year’s awareness efforts include message boards on Wisconsin highways, a WisDOT social media campaign, a WisDOT Transportation Connects Us podcast and an interactive quiz on the Move Over Law. The [lighting of the Hoan Bridge in Milwaukee](#) will also recognize Crash Responder Safety Week.

Visit [wisconsindot.gov/staysafe](#) to learn more about safe driving tips and the Move

Over Law.