

**NEWS RELEASE
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MOVE-OVER GEORGIA! IT'S SAVING LIVES NATIONWIDE
Fewer Police Killed in Traffic Related Fatalities in 2009

(WASHINGTON) - NLEOMF Report: "The last time officer fatalities were this low was in 1959."

Seldom does a study from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) contain such welcome news. Preliminary data compiled by the NLEOMF shows fewer U.S. law enforcement officers died in the line of duty in 2009 than in any year in the past half century! And what's more, the study reported this year's overall reduction in law enforcement deaths was largely driven by **a steep, 21-percent drop in the number of officers killed in traffic-related incidents.**

According to the latest report, fifty-six officers were killed in traffic-related incidents nationwide in 2009. Compare that to 71 officer traffic fatalities in 2008. Twelve traffic enforcement officers were struck and killed by automobiles while outside of their own vehicles in 2009. That's down from 2008 when 18 officers were killed working traffic stops.

"One of the factors we know has made a difference behind the scenes of this national decrease in law enforcement roadway deaths is that more and more states have been passing Move Over Laws like Georgia's," said Director Bob Dallas of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. "The Move Over Law is here to help protect enforcement officers doing their jobs on traffic stops. And it's a law that receives high visibility enforcement in Georgia."

Georgia's Move Over Law is just common sense.. with just two simple parts:

1. Like the name says, it **requires drivers to move-over one lane if possible** whenever an emergency vehicle of *any* kind is working on the side of the road displaying flashing blue, red, yellow or white emergency lights..

And what if traffic is too congested to move-over safely?

2. The **Move-Over Law** says if there's no room to move over, **drivers must slow down, below the posted speed limit and be prepared to stop.**

Police have been enforcing this lifesaving law in Georgia since 2003. And in an effort to modify careless driver behavior, the courts here can fine up to \$500.00 for any careless, distracted, or aggressive motorist who ignores it.

In 2010, according to the National Safety Commission's Move-Over America project, wherever you drive across the country, forty-seven states now have laws like Georgia's. Only police officers on traffic stops in New York, Maryland, Hawaii, and Washington D.C. remain unprotected by Move Over laws.

According to statistics compiled by NLEOMF, before there were nationwide Move-Over Laws, more than 166 law enforcement officers were struck and killed by vehicles along America's highways since 1999. "This decade long tragedy demonstrates that each time an officer makes a traffic stop, it's still one of the gravest dangers police can face on the road today," said GOHS Director Bob Dallas.

"Even with this current decline in 2009, traffic-related incidents are still the leading cause of officer fatalities for the 12th year in a row," said Director Dallas. "The FBI says it even outnumbers police killed by gunfire."

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Sonny Perdue, Governor

Robert F. Dallas, Director



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The **Move-Over Law** was passed here after Georgia road crews, traffic enforcement officers, and other first responders endured needless years of roadside injuries and death due to careless errors made by distracted drivers as they sped by police making traffic stops and emergency crews working roadside jobsites. Nationwide incident reports show emergency vehicles of all types have been struck while working beside a highway even while their red, yellow, blue or white emergency lights were flashing.

"It's one of the greatest perils of wearing a uniform," said GOHS Law Enforcement Coordinator Powell Harrelson. "Our officers observe careless driving nearly every time they make a traffic stop or motorist assist. Anyone who works our roadways is at risk, but our traffic enforcement details are in constant danger."

To maintain officer safety, police patrols often work in tandem to enforce traffic safety laws. While one officer works enforcement, a second officer cites drivers who fail to **move-over or slow down**. This proactive method of **Move-Over Law** enforcement results in more citations and more news coverage.

In 2009, police in 159 Georgia counties cited 3,517 Move Over Law violators, mostly in the Metro Atlanta area. Gwinnett County leads the state in Move Over enforcement with 697 citations, followed by 449 in Cobb, 217 in Fulton, and 203 in Clayton County. Outside Metro Atlanta, Jackson, Rockdale, Fayette, and Henry Counties shared the strictest enforcement efforts with citations numbering in the 70's. More than half of Georgia's counties made fewer than twenty Move Over Law cases that same year, but every county turned in at least one violation.

"Failure to move-over has killer consequences," said Law Enforcement Coordinator Harrelson. "That's exactly why we have the **Move Over Law** here in Georgia. And it isn't just about saving the lives of police officers, deputies and state troopers."

"The law also applies to emergency vehicles operated by our firefighters, paramedics, DOT maintenance and construction crews, and tow truck drivers. These dedicated professionals put their lives on the line every day to make sure our roads are safe for our families to travel," Harrelson said.

But the odds still target police on patrol. Twelve officers died during their daily traffic enforcement duties last year and agency figures cannot keep up with the countless cops who suffer the near misses that never make it into annual reports.

"Unfortunately, violations of Georgia's **Move-Over Law** are still far too common and police still experience too many close calls with too many aggressive drivers," said Director Dallas. Georgia DOT has posted warning signs throughout the State. But all anyone has to do to avoid the **Move Over Law** fine is use this common sense precaution behind the wheel: "**Slow Down. Change Lanes. Save Lives.**"

"Our advice to all drivers is to slow down," says LEC Harrelson. "Look at it this way, you could be saving the life of someone who may someday save yours." Read the full text of Georgia's **Move Over Law** on our website at www.gahighwaysafety.org. For more information on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund studies, visit www.nleomf.com.

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