

123 Main Street  
Anywhere, OH 44621  
May 16, 2000

Dear Editor,

My daughter is a state trooper so many people ask me if I worry about her. Indeed I worry about her, but not for the reasons most people think. It's not the random acts of violence, drug runners and criminals that scare me. She has been well trained and has a fighting chance against them. It's the average motorist who is too preoccupied or drunk to notice the vehicle with the flashing lights stopped at the side of the road that frightens me most. Since the beginning of May, one trooper was killed and two have been injured after their stopped patrol cars, with lights flashing, were struck.

Since the inception of the Ohio Highway Patrol in 1933, 9 troopers, 1 auxiliary officer and two load limit inspectors have been killed while either standing at the side of the road or in their parked cars. These troopers and support personnel were 11 men and 1 woman, ranging in age from 24 to 31, who had families and friends who loved them and who were trying to make our roads safer for everyone. In addition to these fatalities, hundreds of troopers have also been injured.

I would like to think that readers would feel enough compassion for our troopers to watch out for them. But if the readers have no compassion for others, perhaps they will pay more attention in order to protect themselves. Section 4511.213 of the Ohio Revised Code states that when a driver of a motor vehicle approaches a stationary public safety vehicle that is displaying any type of flashing, oscillating or rotating light, he or she must proceed with due caution and change lanes if possible. If it is not possible to change lanes, the driver shall proceed with due caution, reduce the speed of the motor vehicle, and maintain a safe speed for the road, weather, and traffic conditions. Under Section 4511.99 it states that if a person violates Section 4511.213, the court, in addition to all other penalties provided by law, shall impose a fine of two times the usual amount imposed for the violation. According to Mike Perona, Public Information Officer of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, "...if you hurt or kill someone while in violation of this law, the offense could be elevated to misdemeanor or felony status."

In addition to over 1,300 state troopers, Ohio has thousands of other police officers and deputies who make traffic stops everyday as well as other emergency services personnel who must stop beside our highways. They all have family and friends who love them and want them home safely after their shifts are over. I implore your readers to follow the law and please slow down and change lanes, if possible, any time they pass a stopped patrol car or any type of public safety vehicle, not only for the thousands of men and women serving their communities, but also for the people, like me, who love them.

Sincerely,

Mary Smith