



**ODOT and Nationwide Insurance Launch
"Distracted Driver Simulator Tour" at Ohio State Fair**

Featuring 2010 NASCAR Nationwide Series Rookie of the year

COLUMBUS (Monday, August 1, 2011) – To combat cell phone use while driving, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) in sponsorship with Nationwide Insurance, today kicked-off its Distracted Driver Simulator Tour at the 2011 Ohio State Fair – featuring 2010 NASCAR Nationwide Series Rookie of the Year, Ricky Stenhouse, Jr., driver of the No. 6 Blackwell Angus Beef and Cargill Ford for Roush-Fenway Racing.

The Distracted Driver Simulator Tour is part of ODOT's comprehensive roadway safety campaign "**Every Move You Make, Keep It Safe**" which aims to educate Ohioans on how to use the roads safely – whether behind the wheel, behind the handlebars or on foot.

"Distracted driving is dangerous and has grave consequences," said ODOT Director Jerry Wray. "In particular, cell phone use while driving is very risky and our new simulator tour will show Ohioans the real dangers and consequences of distracted driving."

In 2010, law enforcement agencies reported 39 fatalities, 454 serious injuries and 12,410 crashes that were attributed specifically to distracted driving.

ODOT is proud to have Stenhouse, Jr. to share his driving expertise as the voice of ODOT roadway safety public service radio announcements this year. "Every time you take your eyes off the road – even for just a few seconds – you put your life in danger and you put others in danger too," he said.

Crashes cost Ohio nearly \$13 billion a year. About 38% of all serious injuries in Ohio occur at intersections. About 40% of all fatalities involve motorists who hit fixed objects such as trees and utility poles.

"Each year distracted driving accidents account for millions of dollars in damages and countless numbers of lives," said Melissa Lovely, Nationwide sales associate vice president Ohio. "Nationwide wants drivers to understand that every time they talk or text behind the wheel they are making a choice that could have devastating and irreversible consequences."

The department's new safety campaign is linked to Ohio's overall goal of reducing roadway fatalities 5 percent by 2015. With nearly 300,000 crashes across Ohio in 2010 and more than 1,000 deaths, meeting the goal would help save 150 lives.

The distracted driver simulator experience challenges the participant to navigate city streets and highways while talking on the phone, sending a text message and listening to passenger conversations. Find out more by visiting www.everymove.ohio.gov.

<http://www.dot.state.oh.us/news/pages/ODOT-and-Nationwide-Insurance-Launch.aspx>
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