



The Eastern Transportation Coalition

Move Over/Distracted Driving Conference

May 8-10, 2023

The Eastern Transportation Coalition hosted the **Move Over/Distracted Driving Conference: *A Unified Approach to Driving Change on the Roadway*** on May 8-10, 2023. More than 250 people participated in the event either in person (at the Maritime Institute in Linthicum Heights, MD) or via livestream.

This event brought together law enforcement, firefighters, medics, towers, traffic safety experts, policy advocates, social workers, and so many more from around the country to address distracted driving and work to keep responders safe.

The conference included topics such as Responder Awareness, Move Over Laws, Behavioral Health, and much more. We are delighted to share a compilation of resources and highlights from the conference with you.

Resources from the conference can be found below and on the event page (<https://tetcoalition.org/move-over-distracted-driving-conference/>):

- [Agenda & Speaker Bios](#)
- [Livestream Recording Links](#)
- [Reference Links from presentations](#)
- [Vendor Info](#)



Keynote speaker **Eriks Gabliks of the National Fire Academy (NFA)** started the conference with a reminder that information is available for free (such as respondersafety.com). It is the job of the transportation specialist to study it, implement it, and share it with others.

Moderated by **Joel Feldman of End Distracted Driving**, survivors and family members of victims of distracted driving shared their heartbreaking experiences and the incredible steps they've taken toward rectifying the problems through community change, educational initiatives, and legal/statutory measures to prevent distracted driving casualties in the future.



Joel Feldman spoke about his experiences teaching children about **distracted driving**. Children are conscious and aware of the problems and are willing to speak out against them. Joel highlighted that children think of distracted driving as selfish, irresponsible, and disrespectful while adults think of it as scary, risky, or dangerous. Children can maximize effectiveness in discouraging distracted driving by using “I” statements rather than “you” statements when confronting others.

“Community Risk Reduction, coordination, education, and the power of YOU”

One takeaway from a Conference participant

During the second day of the conference, **Nick Breul of the National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund** and several leaders presented the **Importance of Data in Responder Awareness and Training**, noting that there is a need to collect statistics and data

about “struck-bys” and “near misses.” Other issues discussed related to the National Law Enforcement Roadway Safety Program (NLERSP) and training, including risk reduction for Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs). It was emphasized that first responder training (for each role) needs to be standardized.



Lieutenant Brady Robinette of Lubbock Fire Rescue and Sergeant Bob Bemis of Pennsylvania State Police presented the effectiveness of **Helmet and Head Protection**. LEOs and tow operators represent the most struck-bys, but only DOT operations staff and firefighters wear helmets – and those helmets are only designed for falling objects. There is current research and coordination to design an appropriate helmet for workers on the roadway, but it will require legislation, data collection, industry buy-in, and policy buy-in to implement. The Coalition plans to discuss this topic as part of HOGs exchanges in Fall 2023.

The most important organ in the body - “The Brain”



Representatives from the **Federal Highway Administration**, **Steven Austin of CVVFA/Emergency Responder Safety Institute**, **Todd Leiss of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission**, and several others highlighted the importance of **Engaging with Lawmakers**, especially for standardizing **Move Over Laws**.

Participants were encouraged to meet with their lawmakers and were provided these tips to improve their effectiveness:

- Be very specific in the ask from lawmakers
- Engage local lawmakers but also understand their committee assignments
- Don't hesitate to ask decision-makers to ride along with your workers on the roadway
- Meet lawmakers at the statehouse while in session or at their local offices when not in session
- Understand that the process will take time

“We can't accept “good enough” when it comes to safety” - *Conference participant*

The third day of the Move Over Conference focused on mental health and marketing, led by **Dr. Candice McDonald of CVVFA/NVFC**. **Randall Resch of Randall Resch Training**, **Dave Lewis of CVVFA/NVFC**, and **Yvette Graham** emphasized that traumatic events are a tragic part of the first responders' career but suffering through depression and emotional health issues does not have to be.



Additionally, Nick Breul of the National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund highlighted resources for mental health within the first responder field such as [SAFLEO](#) and the [First Responder Helpline](#). SAFLEO has great success working with peer agencies from other parts of the country who understand the work situation and offer confidential help. First responders can access the [First Responder Helpline](#) for them and their families enrolling in NVFC.

Cindy Iodice of Flagman, Inc and Yvette Graham of The Ohio State University reminded participants that outreach does not have to come from top-down initiatives – you can speak to people you meet every day and understand their situation. Marketing at every opportunity is crucial and understanding that different communities have different contexts and backgrounds matters.

Elizabeth Falcon of New Jersey DOT showcased the great success of their Slow Down, Move Over initiative that was championed by Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti. The Commissioner emphasized that “Every responder deserves to go home at the end of the day.”



Lisa Miller of the Eastern Transportation Coalition encouraged agencies to use marketing to increase the trust of the public. She highlighted marketing videos from Utah DOT that demonstrated both infrastructure upgrades and move-over initiatives.

Jeff Larason and Sam McClain from Travelers Marketing reminded participants that effective campaigns require consistent and repetitious use of marketing and celebrity endorsement. They encouraged participants to acquire marketing funding from the 405H (National Priority Safety Program) or highway safety offices.

Sponsoring Vendors (a list can be found [here](#)) also demonstrated a variety of emerging technologies for first responders, ranging from vehicles and lighting to barriers and in-vehicle devices. Vendors provided excellent information for attendees to learn about technologies that can help save lives in the field.

Additional Participant Quotes

- *I particularly like the "RealScene" VR training concept as I could see this to be beneficial not just for TIM but also for TMC operations and training in the future!*
- *The emerging technologies can and will assist in preventing "struck by fatalities" by alerting motorists of highway incidents.*
- *It takes passion to move the needle.*

The Coalition would also like to thank the presenters for helping make this conference a success. Conferences such as these allow participants to meet, share knowledge and exchange ideas.

Questions or Comments:

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