



Fleet Administration Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER 2019

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Texas Move Over Law

by Brian Reynolds

The Texas State legislature passed the state's original Move Over law in 2003. It was designed to protect all law enforcement officers, emergency vehicles, and first responders from being struck by a driver while working on the side of a road or highway. The law requires any driver approaching a stopped emergency vehicle with lights activated to slow down or move over one lane.

The legislature amended the move over law in 2011 to include tow trucks to the list of emergency vehicles. More recently, the law was again amended to include all TxDOT vehicles stopped on the side of the road with activated lights.

There are two parts to the Texas move over law; moving over one lane and slowing down. All drivers must move over one lane if traveling on a multi-lane roadway when approaching a stopped emergency vehicle with activated lights on the same side of the road as the driver. This places an empty lane between the driver and the emergency personnel.

If a driver is unable to move over, then they are to slow down to a speed equal to 20 miles per hour lower than the posted speed, provided the speed limit is greater than 25 miles per hour. If the posted speed is 25 miles per hour or less, the driver is to slow down to a speed 5 miles per hour until they pass the stopped emergency vehicle.

Failure to do move over or slow down will result in a potential fine or citation of thousands of dollars. Hitting an emergency worker will lead to jail time.

Over 100 Texas Transportation Department employees have died after being struck by a vehicle since 1938 making Texas roadways and construction zones one of the deadliest places to work.

All 50 States now have move over laws in effect. Whether you're driving on a Texas road or highway, or traveling to another state, remember to slow down and move over!

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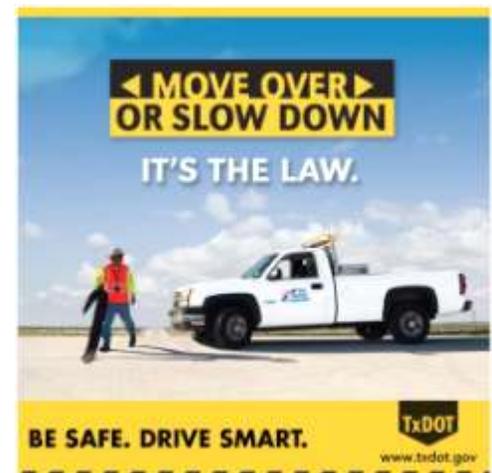
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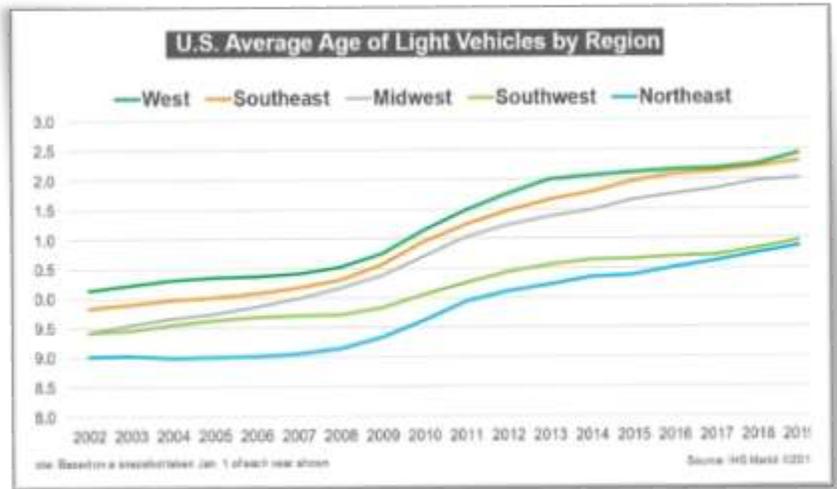
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Average Age of U.S. Vehicles Continues to Rise

by Automotive Fleet Magazine staff



The average age of light vehicles in operation in the U.S. has risen again this year to 11.8 years, according to new research from IHS Markit.

Analysts noted this acceleration of average age can easily be seen when looking across the last 17 years: From 2002 to 2007, the average age of light vehicles in the U.S. increased by 3.5%. From 2008 to 2013, however, the increase was 12.2%. Over the last five years, the average age increase has returned to its more traditional rate, aging by 4% over this time period.

"Better technology and overall vehicle quality improvements continue to be key drivers of the rising average vehicle age over time," said Mark Seng, director, global automotive aftermarket practice at IHS Markit. "The 40% drop in new-vehicle sales due to the recession created an acceleration in average age like we've never seen before. In the last couple of years, however, average age has returned to its more traditional rate of increase."

Light vehicles in operation in the U.S. have now reached a record level of more than 278 million, according to the analysis — an increase of more than 5.9 million (2.2%) since 2018. This represents one of the highest annual increases the U.S. auto industry has seen since IHS Markit began tracking VIO growth — second only to the 2.3% growth in 2016.

"The increasing VIO fleet is providing a robust new business pipeline for the aftermarket," said Seng. "A larger fleet means more service and repair opportunities in the future."

For the first time, the analysis included a review of various regions around the country. The oldest light vehicles are found in the West at 12.4 years while the youngest are found in the Northeast at 10.9 years. In addition, the light vehicle fleet is not aging at the same rate across regions. In the West, light vehicles increased 1.5% from 2018 to 2019 while in the Midwest they aged by just 0.4%. The state of Montana has the oldest average age with light vehicles averaging 16.6 years. The youngest average age is in Vermont, where the average age of light vehicles is 9.9 years.

Because of the growth in popularity of light trucks — including CUVs/SUVs — vehicle age in the U.S. is also increasing at different rates across vehicle segments. From 2018-2019, the average age of passenger cars increased 2.2% while light trucks aged at a rate of just 0.1%.

Analysts said the shifting dynamic of the age of vehicles in operation indicates the volumes of vehicles in the new to five-year-old category will grow 2% from 2018 to 2023, while vehicles in the six- to 11-year-old range will grow 27%. This is a very positive trend for the independent aftermarket as it points to a growing repair sweet spot — or growth in the vehicles which drive the most repair opportunities. In contrast, vehicles 12-15 years old will decline 27% over the same time period.

"While the decrease in light vehicles 12-15 years of age looks alarming, it relates to the drop in sales due to the recession," said Seng. "There is simply a lack of 2008 and 2009 model year vehicles due to the lower sales numbers during that timeframe. Even the model years from early in the recovery are lower in number. This disruption simply needs time to work its way through the fleet."

POLICY NOTES

At no time may a County vehicle be used for personal gain, personal business, to drive to a place of secondary or part-time employment not related to County business, or for any other non-County-related use.

All drivers of County vehicles, and those using their personal vehicles on County business, shall comply with all applicable State and local laws. It will be the responsibility of the official/employee to pay any fines imposed for not complying with such laws.

Seat belts shall be worn and secured at all times when the vehicle is moving.

The use of tobacco is prohibited in all County vehicles.

The current Smith County Vehicle Policy can be found [here](#) on the Smith County website. Watch for updates.

Smith County Fleet Info

by Brian Reynolds

Smith County operates approximately 300 vehicles in support of the various departments and offices within county government. This number can fluctuate based on new vehicles arriving, vehicles lost due to accidents, and addition of staff.

Other equipment, particularly in the Road and Bridge department, adds approximately another 150 pieces of machinery that is operated by county staff but is not passenger vehicles. Some of these include rollers, pavers, excavators, and loaders.



Of the 300 vehicles in Smith County, over 200 are pickup trucks and SUV's. About 50 are heavy duty vehicles like dump trucks or cargo carrying trucks.

The significant majority of our vehicles are used by law enforcement or public safety such as Sheriff's Office, Constables, Fire Marshall, and Jail.



With hundreds of employees dependent on reliable vehicles to conduct the business of Smith County, the upkeep and updating of the fleet is crucial.

Maintaining this many vehicles and this large equipment requires extensive knowledge and a large shop. Staff from the Road and Bridge department handle most of the repairs and maintenance for county vehicles, and they have mobile mechanics that can go out to the work sites in the county and perform repairs

on larger equipment as well as those that work inside the shop.

The vehicles that Smith County operates are critical resources for employees. Sheriff's deputies, Constables, and various employees working across the county often spend 12 hours or more working in their vehicles. Facilities staff use their vehicles to transport tools and supplies to job sites across the county. The Records Services Division uses their van to transport crucial documents and records to and from courtrooms and offices throughout the county.

Fleet Administration works with the various offices and departments to develop a replacement plan that will maximize the value of each vehicle and offers the lowest total cost of ownership over the vehicles life. In some cases this may involve reassigning a vehicle to a different office or identifying what equipment should be a priority for replacement. Fleet Administration then presents the replacement plan to the Commissioners Court for approval as part of the budget process.

Specialty Equipment

by Brian Reynolds

County vehicles are often specialized for unique or, at a minimum, very specific purposes. Here's some interesting facts about various types of equipment we use.

Sheriff's Office and Jail vehicles are often equipped with partitions and seats that are specifically made for transporting prisoners. These are designed to be durable, easy to clean, and safe.



Texas Begins Distracted Driving Awareness Campaign

Originally published in Automotive Fleet magazine

In Texas, one in five crashes involve distracted driving which is among the reasons why The Texas Department of Transportation has launched "Heads Up, Texas," a campaign to discourage driver distractions, according to a KCBD report.

The initiative was launched in San Antonio because the city had the highest occurrence of distracted driving in the state last year — 19,113 accidents, including 33 fatalities, reports the San Antonio Express-News.

According to TxDOT officials, the campaign is no longer just a public safety suggestion

but rather designed to remind motorists of the law, which prohibits texting while driving.

The Lone Star State's texting while driving ban may be helping the problem, even if minimally, reports KCBD.com.

Recent data shows that the number of collisions involving distracted driving in Texas dropped by 6% when compared to the 12-month periods before and after the statewide ban took effect in Sept. 2017, notes the report.

TxDOT originally introduced "Heads up, Texas" in 2018 to address the new law. The

2019 campaign kicked off on June 4. There is a 12-city, virtual reality experience tour planned to educate Texans across the state about the dangers of distracted driving.



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Smith County government is composed of 48 departments, including 26 headed by elected officials, with the county auditor having been appointed by the District Judges, and 12 appointees by the Commissioners Court. Smith County has approximately 800 staff positions.

County services and responsibilities include:

- Building and maintaining county roads.
- Operating the Judicial system.
- Registering voters and holding elections.
- Maintaining public records.
- Participation in economic development incentive and programs.
- Providing health and social services to the indigent.
- Assisting Veterans and their dependents w/ benefit/entitlement claims
- Providing law enforcement.
- Building and operating jails.
- Issuing vehicle registrations.
- Collection of property and sales taxes

Fleet Administration was formed as a department in 2017 to administer the Smith County fleet policies and manage the vehicle assets and related equipment. As a support department Fleet Administration is responsible to ensure that the delegated Smith County funds provide the vehicle resources that will help all departments serve the community with excellence.

Smith County Motor Pool Program

Smith County employees are reminded there are low mileage vehicles available for use when conducting county business at no cost to the department.

Reserve via email or phone with the Fleet Administrator, confirm the reservation provided in Outlook, and pick up the keys when needed. A fuel card and PIN is provided for your convenience as well.

When done, make sure the vehicle is fueled, you have recorded the mileage, and drop off the keys. It really is this simple.

Fleet Administration contact info is listed above.