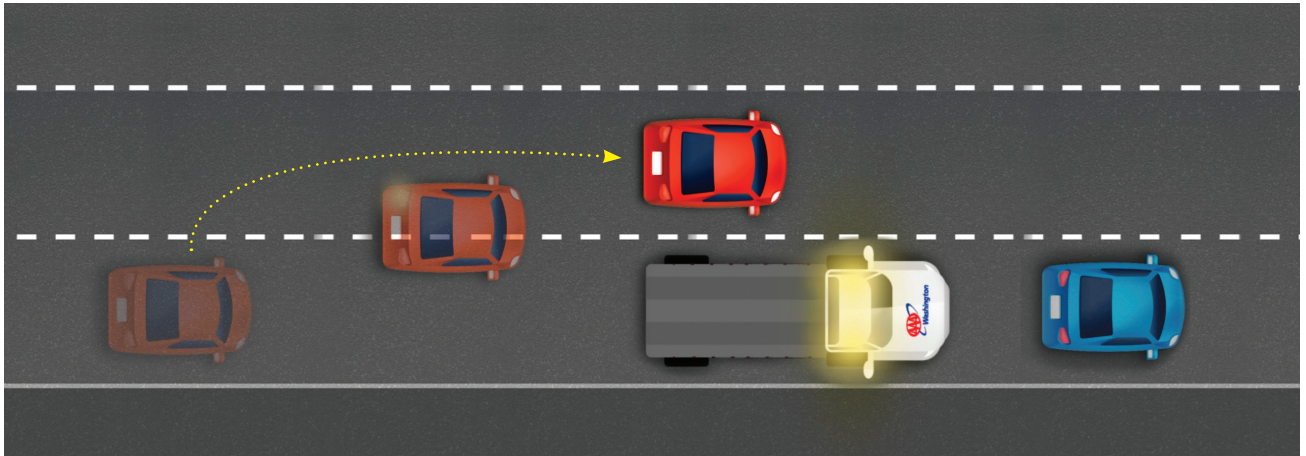


# Slow down. Move over. “That’s all you’ve got to do.”



▶ A frightening collision with a tow truck technician, who was helping a AAA member, provides a stark reminder of the consequences of failing to slow down and move over for first responders.

Washington law states that when drivers spot flashing emergency lights up ahead, they must slow down by at least 10 miles per hour (mph) below the posted speed limit and, if safe to do so, move over one lane. Idaho has a similar requirement, but drivers are required to slow down by 5 mph.

That wasn't the case on the night Chris Amedio was dispatched on southbound I-5 near Kelso, Washington. A semitruck couldn't move over as it approached the site and hit the rear corner of a car that had just pulled out slowly from the shoulder. As a result, the car was pushed in the direction of Amedio and his tow truck. If not for his quick-thinking and evasive actions, Amedio might have been killed. Now recovering from serious leg and back injuries, 24-year-old Amedio agreed to share his story and make a personal plea for drivers to stay aware and alert while behind the wheel.

"It's just a very scary thought to think that I couldn't have come home that night," said Amedio. "In all honesty, I probably shouldn't have come home that night."

**What happened the night of the crash?** I looked up and I saw what was unfolding in front of me. I screamed as loud as I could to get her [the driver of the car's] attention, which did not work. I knew my only hope was to get out of the way. So, I jumped to try to get on top of her car or my truck. I didn't care which one. I just needed to keep my vital organs out of the way.

**Why do drivers fail to slow down and move over?** They are not aware of their surroundings. They're too busy texting, playing with the radio or looking around. When you're on the highway, you need to pay attention to what's in front of you and what's on the side of you. ... Don't risk other people's lives because you're in a rush.

## How do you describe your work environment?

Think about it this way. You're sitting in an office cubicle and you've got about a foot on each side of your cubicle. Now imagine a highway on both sides.

## Your advice to drivers?

- Slow down. Move over. That's all you've got to do and that will help us tremendously.
- Think of others, not just yourself. The first responders you go past at 80 miles per hour are someone's brother, sister, mother or father.
- Don't risk other people's lives because you're in a rush.
- With tow operators putting their lives on the line every day to rescue stranded members, AAA has strongly advocated for the "Move Over" laws enacted in all 50 states. The Washington and Idaho statutes include police cars, fire trucks, ambulances, tow trucks and road construction trucks. Drivers who violate Washington's Move Over law get a \$214 ticket, which cannot be waived or reduced. The violation receives a \$90 ticket in Idaho.

Rather than focusing on citations and penalties, AAA urges drivers to stop and think about the men and women working along our roadways and the families waiting for them to come home safely at the end of every shift. Please protect them by choosing to slow down and move over. — **KELLY JUST**