

2015 marks second worst year for move over law

By Sarah Sobanski

Over a fifth of charges laid in a province-wide OPP move over campaign were laid in East Region.

101 of 471 charges laid during the OPP's Slow Down, Move Over campaign during the August long weekend were laid by East Region OPP. The East Region includes the Bancroft OPP.

The blitz ran from July 29 to Aug. 1. It saw the OPP conduct an enforcement and education campaign focusing on the 2003 Move Over law.

The law makes drivers responsible for slowing down and moving over into another lane if it is safe to do so when approaching emergency vehicles or tow trucks parked on the side of a highway.

"I've been in vehicles before where I'm writing up a notice for someone who has been going way over the speed limit and a car comes by you and your car shakes," said Bancroft OPP officer Philippe Regamey while discussing the law. "They're that close and they're going that fast. Usually, they're not paying attention cause you can see those blue and red lights from miles away."

In 2015, OPP investigated 11 vehicles that were struck while parked on the side of the road. 10 of these vehicles were emergency services vehicles. Five OPP officers have died in roadside collisions where they were struck by approaching vehicles since 1989. None of these fatalities were in the Bancroft area.

Regamey noted that many of the highways in Bancroft and surrounding areas are two-lane highways, which can make it hard to move over for emergency vehicles. He said drivers should to slow down and keep the traffic behind them slow if they can't move over safely.

"When you're driving fast, blowing by [emergency vehicles], you have no idea what is going to happen," said Regamey. "If you're on a two-lane highway, you need to at least slow right down while passing emergency vehicles or you need to even drive over the yellow line if it's safe to do so. The vehicle has to pull over into the other lane as long as it's safe to do so."

He added, "If you are being pulled over, don't stop in between guardrails. Don't stop on a corner. You can slow down, put your four-way lights on just to recognize yes I see you [officer], I'm going to be pulling over, I'm just making sure it is a safe place to do so. I've had a lot of people do that, and we appreciate it."

The OPP laid 2,031 charges against drivers who failed to obey the law in 2015, the second-highest count per year since the law was enacted in 2003. In 2008, more than 2,800 charges were laid. The first charge can mean up to a \$400 to \$2,000 fine and three demerit points for the person behind the wheel. Slowing down for emergencies is very important on the road, you don't know who you could be blocking and how much they need to get through, however, this does not mean that at all times you should be going slowly because this can actually cause accidents. There is a [law governing dangerously slow drivers](#) who could potentially cause obstructions on the road.

"Our preference as the police is to have every driver respect the law rather than to issue provincial offenses notices. If we never have to write one of those tickets again, that's awesome. If we never have another officer hit on the side of the road, that's awesome," said Regamey.