

\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\*

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### WSP Trooper Seriously Injured By Distracted Driver

**Bellevue** – Washington State Patrol (WSP) Trooper Michael Patoc sustained serious injuries while assisting a disabled motorist blocking a lane of eastbound I-90 near West Lake Sammamish Parkway last night just before 7:30pm. Trooper Patoc was out of his patrol car attempting to clear a disabled motorist in the center lane when his vehicle was struck by an inattentive driver. The force of that impact was so great it crushed the rear of his patrol car launching it forward into the disabled vehicle which in turn struck Trooper Patoc throwing him several feet. Trooper Patoc sustained serious injuries and was immediately rushed to Overlake Hospital where he was treated and released late this morning. There were no other injuries reported.

The causing driver, a 24 year female Snoqualmie resident, stated she observed the patrol cars emergency lights but did not realize it was stopped. She went on to say she looked down to adjust the dash controls in her vehicle before she struck the patrol car at freeway speeds.

Washington State's "Move Over" law has been in effect since January 1, 2012 (RCW 46.61.212). It requires drivers entering an emergency zone proceed with "due regard for safety".

District Commander Ron Mead expressed thanks for the quick response and excellent care provided by local fire fighters and paramedics when he responded to the hospital to check on the welfare of his trooper following the collision. While there he relayed a stark reminder for all drivers.

*"It appears the causing driver in this instance was distracted, it's important to remember that although cell phones as distraction have been paramount in the media lately all distractions are hazardous while driving. Our message is simple; **when you are driving, focus on driving**. This crash was entirely avoidable had the driver been paying attention. I am grateful that as serious as the injuries to the trooper are, they aren't any worse."*



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