



Reporting Potholes & Road Problems Online

Potholes & Road Problems Online

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1789** —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Here is the whole guide in a nutshell. Whose road it is decides where your report goes. Interstate, U.S. and State Routes outside city limits belong to ODOT, the Ohio Department of Transportation, which has an online roadway defect form at its official site. County roads belong to the Portage County Engineer. Streets with only a name inside a city or village belong to that city or village, such as Kent, Ravenna, or Streetsboro, so use that city's own website or call its service department. Before you report, gather the road name, the nearest cross street, a landmark, and a safe photo if the form allows one. Always type the official address yourself and look for dot gov or the city's real domain. Reporting is free, and no real agency asks for gift cards or passwords. If a hazard is dangerous, call 911 first. If any part of this feels tangled, I am happy to walk through it with you, so please give me a call.

1. Whose Road Is It, Anyway?

The one question that decides where your report goes.

You hit a pothole, or you spot a crumbling edge, a broken sign, or a drain that has sunk. Your first thought is to tell somebody. The trouble is that in Ohio there is no single office that fixes every road. The right office depends on whose road it is.

That is the whole idea behind this guide. If you send a report to the wrong agency, it usually gets passed along or set aside, and the hole stays put. If you send it to the right one the first time, the report lands in front of the crew that can actually fill it.

I wrote this guide so you can work out the owner in a minute or two, find the official online form or phone number, and give them what they need. None of it is hard. It is mostly a matter of knowing which door to knock on.

- State and federal routes belong to the Ohio Department of Transportation, called ODOT.
- County roads belong to the Portage County Engineer.
- Streets inside a city or village belong to that city or village.
- Township roads are handled by the township.

GOOD TO KNOW

Do not worry if you cannot tell the owner at first. The next few chapters show you how to figure it out, and ODOT's own form will even tell you if the road is not theirs.

2. The Main Road Owners at a Glance

Who looks after what in Portage County.

Think of the roads around you as belonging to different landlords. Each landlord fixes only its own property. Here in Portage County, the county engineer's website lays out the split plainly, and I have followed it here.

ODOT is responsible for the state highways. The county engineer looks after the county highway system, which the county's website says is 368 miles of county road and 172 county-owned bridges. The engineer also advises the township trustees on township roads. Inside the cities and villages, the city or village is responsible for its own roadways.

- Interstate, U.S. and State Routes outside city limits: ODOT.
- County roads and county bridges: Portage County Engineer.
- Township roads: the township trustees, with advice from the engineer.
- City and village streets: that city or village.
- The Ohio Turnpike: the Ohio Turnpike Commission.

Keep this short list nearby. Almost every road problem you will ever see fits into one of those five lines.

Notice that the question is never which agency is best or nearest. It is only whose road it is. Once you know that, everything else about reporting gets simpler and a good deal less stressful.

TIP

Write the five lines on a sticky note and put it by your computer or phone. It saves you from guessing each time.

3. What to Gather Before You Report

A few details make your report useful.

A good report is a specific report. Crews cannot fix a pothole described only as being somewhere on the main road. Before you open any form, spend two minutes collecting the facts.

Most forms ask for the same basics. If you have them ready, filling in the form takes only a few minutes, and you are less likely to give up halfway through.

- The name of the road or the route number.
- The nearest intersection, mile marker, or house number.

- The direction you were traveling.
- A landmark, such as a church, store, or mailbox.
- What the problem is: pothole, sunken pavement, debris, or a damaged sign.
- Roughly how big it is and which lane it is in.
- Your name and a way to reach you.

If you are not sure of a detail, say so honestly rather than guessing. An honest approximate is better than a confident wrong answer.

It also helps to decide in advance how you will send the report, whether by a web form or a phone call, so the details you gathered match what the agency asks for.

WATCH OUT

Never stop in a traffic lane to take notes or photos. Note the details after you have safely pulled over, or ask a passenger to jot them down.

4. Telling State, County and City Roads Apart

Clues you can see from the driver's seat.

You do not need a map to guess the owner. The road itself often tells you, if you know what to look for.

Roads with a number on a shield are usually maintained by ODOT, unless they run through a city or village. Roads with only a name on the green street sign are normally local streets. County roads in Ohio also have numbers, but they are shown differently from state routes, so the shield and sign style can help.

- 1 Look at the road sign for a shield with a number.
- 2 Ask whether you are inside city or village limits, or out in the country.
- 3 Check the name on the street sign at the nearest corner.
- 4 If the road has a name and no route number, it is not an ODOT road.
- 5 When you still cannot tell, use the county engineer's page or call the township or city hall and ask.

It is perfectly fine to be unsure. Officials hear this question all the time, and they would rather answer it than lose the report.

GOOD TO KNOW

ODOT's own form explains that a street with a name and no other route number is not under its maintenance. It points you toward the city, township, village, or county instead.

5. Reading Route Shields and Signs

Learn the three shapes you see on state roads.

Route shields are the little signs with numbers, posted along the highway. They are your best clue that a road is maintained at the state level. Learning to spot them takes only a short drive.

Interstates carry a shield with a number. U.S. routes carry a different shield, and State Routes carry a third. ODOT's form asks you to pick which of those three you are on, and then to type the number. That is why it helps to glance at the sign before you pull out of the lot.

- Interstate: a numbered shield, like the major highways.
- U.S. Route: its own shield style with a number.
- State Route: an Ohio shape with a number.
- No shield: usually a county, township, or city street.

If you take a photo from a safe spot, include a sign in the frame. That helps whoever reads your report match your location to the right road.

Do not worry about memorizing the shapes. The point is only to notice whether a number is posted, because that single clue tells you which of the next chapters to read.

TIP

Reading the sign is easier from the passenger seat. If you are alone, wait until you are parked, then look up the nearest numbered route on a map.

6. The Ohio Turnpike Exception

One highway that does not follow the usual rules.

There is one large road in Portage County that is not looked after by ODOT, the county, or any city. It is the Ohio Turnpike. The county engineer's website notes that the Turnpike is responsible for Interstate 80 and the bridges over it as it runs through the county.

That means a hole or hazard on the Turnpike itself goes to the Ohio Turnpike Commission, not to ODOT. The Turnpike is a toll road, and it has its own operators and its own contact information.

This catches many people off guard because Interstate 80 looks like any other big highway. If you are on a toll road, or on the section of Interstate 80 the Turnpike runs, use

the Turnpike's official channels. I have not listed a number here, because contact details change. Look for the official Turnpike Commission website and its contact page.

- Toll plazas and Turnpike signs tell you that you are on that road.
- A Turnpike problem goes to the Turnpike Commission.
- Other Interstates and state routes go to ODOT.

WATCH OUT

If a hazard on any highway puts people in immediate danger, call 911 first. Report the pothole later from home.

7. Finding ODOT's Road Problem Form

The official page for state-road potholes and damage.

ODOT, the Ohio Department of Transportation, has an online form for reporting a pothole or other roadway defect on a state-maintained road. The page is titled with the words Report a Roadway Defect or Damage Incident. It lives on ODOT's official Ohio government site.

The safest way to get there is to start at transportation.ohio.gov, the department's main site, and look for the section about reporting a pothole or roadway defect. You can also use the address the department publishes for its damage report page. Type the address yourself rather than tapping a link from a message.

- 1 Open your web browser and type transportation.ohio.gov in the address bar at the top.
- 2 Look for a search box or menu on the home page.
- 3 Search for the words roadway defect or report a pothole.
- 4 Open the result that is on the transportation.ohio.gov or dot.state.oh.us site.
- 5 Confirm the page mentions ODOT and a form with a Subject choice.

Both addresses belong to the state. If a page you land on is some other kind of website, close it and start again.

TIP

Add the form page to your browser's bookmarks once you find it. Next winter you will be glad it is one click away.

8. Filling In ODOT's Form, Step by Step

What each part of the form asks you.

The form is a single page with several boxes. A star beside a box means it is required.

Take it one box at a time, and you will be done in a few minutes.

- 1 Subject: choose Pothole, Debris, Collision with an ODOT or contractor vehicle, Damage to a mailbox from an ODOT vehicle, or Other.
- 2 County: choose Portage from the list.
- 3 Route Type: choose Interstate, U.S. Route, or State Route.
- 4 Route Number: type the number only.
- 5 Milepost, nearest intersection or exit: describe where you are.
- 6 Lane or ramp, and direction of travel: pick from the lists.
- 7 Date and time: enter when you noticed it or when it happened.
- 8 Construction zone: choose Yes, No, or Unsure.
- 9 Result: choose whether there was vehicle damage, injury, both, or neither.
- 10 Add your name, email, and phone, then submit.

There is a comments box where you can describe what you saw. Use plain, short sentences.

Take a breath and go slowly. If you make a mistake in one box, you can click back and fix it before you submit, and nothing is sent until you press the final button.

GOOD TO KNOW

The form lists Portage among its counties. If you are unsure of a box, choose Unsure or Unknown rather than leaving it blank.

9. The Route Number Box Trips People Up

A small field with a firm rule.

The Route Number box on ODOT's form is picky. It accepts numbers only. It will not take letters or other characters. That surprises people who think of a road by its name, such as a main street through town.

If the road you are on has a name and no route number, that is a sign it is not an ODOT road. The form says as much. A local street, avenue, or boulevard with only a name is handled by the city, township, village, or county where it sits.

- Type digits only, for example the numeral on the shield.

- Do not type the words Route, State, or US in the box.
- Choose the right Route Type first, so the number makes sense.
- If you cannot find a number, you are probably on a local road.

When you cannot find a route number anywhere, do not force the form. Go to the county engineer or your city instead, which the next chapters cover.

WATCH OUT

Do not guess a route number just to get the form to submit. A wrong number can send your report to the wrong place and delay a fix.

10. What Happens After You Submit to ODOT

What to expect, in plain terms.

Once you press submit, your report goes to the ODOT District office that covers the county you chose. A person there looks at it. ODOT's form tells you what comes next, and I have repeated it here in my own words.

The district will contact you by email or phone. They tell you who has maintenance responsibility. It may be ODOT itself, a contractor working for ODOT, or another agency such as the city or the county. If the road is not theirs, they give you the information you need to reach the correct party.

The form asks you to allow one to two business days for a reply. That does not mean the hole is filled in that time. It means someone responds to you about the report.

- Watch your email, including the spam folder.
- Keep your phone nearby if you gave a number.
- Save the reply, since it may name who to contact next.

If the reply says the road belongs to someone else, do not feel you wasted your time. You now have the correct agency, and you can pass along the same details you already gathered.

WATCH OUT

Add the ODOT email address to your contacts after your first reply so later messages do not slip into the junk folder.

11. ODOT District 4 and Portage County

The regional office behind the form.

ODOT divides Ohio into regional districts. According to ODOT's district pages, Portage County is in District 4, which is based in the Akron area. The same district covers neighbors such as Summit, Stark, Trumbull, Mahoning, and Ashtabula counties.

You usually do not need to contact the district yourself. The online form sends your report there for you. The district office is handy to know about if you prefer to speak to a person, or if you are not sure that the form worked.

ODOT's district page lists the District 4 address in Akron and a main phone number. Because phone numbers and office details can change, I suggest you read them straight off the official page rather than trusting a printed copy, including this one.

- 1 Go to transportation.ohio.gov.
- 2 Find the Districts page.
- 3 Choose District 4.
- 4 Read the address and main phone number listed there.

If you are standing on a state route in Portage County and want a real person, the district office is the place that handles it. Be patient on the phone, as they may serve several counties.

GOOD TO KNOW

Call during normal weekday office hours, and have your road, route number, and nearest intersection ready.

12. The Portage County Engineer

The office for county roads and bridges.

If your road is a county road, the Portage County Engineer is the office to tell. According to the county's website, the engineer is responsible for maintenance, repair, resurfacing, and reconstruction of pavements and bridges on the county highway system. That includes traffic control, safety, mowing, and snow removal.

The engineer's page on portagecounty-oh.gov lists a phone number for the County Engineer, which is (330) 296-6411. That is a good way to ask a quick question, such as whether a particular road is a county road.

The county site is run by the county government, and it ends in dot gov. That is exactly the kind of address I like to see.

- 1 Go to portagecounty-oh.gov and type it yourself.
- 2 Find the Engineer's page from the menu or the search box.
- 3 Read the contact information listed there.
- 4 Call, or follow the contact options the page shows.

Saving the engineer's number in your phone under a clear name, such as County Roads Engineer, makes it easy to find the next time a hole appears on a county road near you.

TIP

Say the road name, the nearest cross street, and which township you are in. Those three details help the engineer's staff find the spot fast.

13. Township Roads and Your Trustees

The smallest roads still have an owner.

Portage County has eighteen townships, and each one has a board of trustees. According to the county engineer's website, the engineer advises those boards on maintaining and repairing township roads. The trustees themselves are responsible for township highways.

So if your problem is on a small rural road with a name and no shield, the township may be the correct place to report it. Many townships have a phone number or a contact page on their own website, or on the county site.

The engineer's page adds one more detail. Bridges on township roads with a span of ten feet or more are the full responsibility of the County Engineer. Smaller bridges belong to the township. If your concern is a bridge, mention that when you call.

- Look at the nearest road sign for the township name.
- Search for your township's official website or call the trustees.
- If still unsure, ask the County Engineer, who can point you right.

If you live on a township road and cannot find a website, the trustees' phone number is often printed in the local phone book or posted at the township hall. A short call usually does the job.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can find your township on your property tax bill. It is not always the same as your mailing address town.

14. Reporting to the City of Kent

Kent's online Report a Concern form.

If the problem is on a city street in Kent, the City of Kent is who you tell. The city's official website is kentohio.gov, and it has a page called Report a Concern and FAQs. The page says plainly that you can report a pothole, a street light outage, or another concern.

The page links to an online Report a Concern form, where you describe the nature and location of the problem. The city says there is an option to upload pictures. A photo can help the crew find the right spot.

- 1 Type kentohio.gov into your browser's address bar.
- 2 Open the Living Here menu, then Report a Concern and FAQs.
- 3 Choose the Report a Concern form.
- 4 Describe the problem and the exact location.
- 5 Add a photo if you have one, then submit.

If you would rather talk to a person, the Kent Service Department's number on the city's FAQ page is 330-678-8105. City Hall is at 319 S. Water Street, with a main number of 330-678-8100.

TIP

Use the city's own site, kentohio.gov, and not an app or a random search result. Official city pages end in dot gov.

15. Reporting in Ravenna

Finding the city's own street department.

Ravenna is the Portage County seat, and its city streets are the city's job. A pothole on a Ravenna street that has only a name on the sign goes to the City of Ravenna, not to ODOT or the county.

I was not able to confirm a specific online pothole form for Ravenna when I wrote this guide, so I will not invent one. Instead, here is how to find the right place. The city's own website and City Hall can tell you whether there is an online service request, a phone number for the service or street department, or both.

- 1 Search for City of Ravenna Ohio and look for the city's official website.
- 2 Look for words such as Service Department, Street Department, or Report a Concern.

- 3 Use the online form if there is one.
- 4 If not, call City Hall and ask for the street or service department.

Ravenna also has state routes running through it. On those, the situation can be mixed, so a quick phone call to the city is often the fastest way to learn who handles that stretch.

WATCH OUT

Ravenna Township and the City of Ravenna are not the same government. Make sure you are contacting the one where the road actually sits.

16. Reporting in Streetsboro

Streetsboro's service department.

Streetsboro is a city, so its local streets are cared for by the city's own crews. As with Ravenna, I could not confirm a specific online form when I wrote this guide, and I would rather tell you that plainly than guess.

Streetsboro's official city website and City Hall are the right starting points. Look for a Service Department, a Public Works page, or a Report a Concern or service request link. Many Ohio cities now offer a simple online request, and Streetsboro may as well.

- 1 Search for City of Streetsboro Ohio and open the official city site.
- 2 Look in the menus for Service Department or Public Works.
- 3 Use a service request form if one is offered.
- 4 Otherwise call City Hall and ask who takes street repair reports.

Numbered state routes in the area may belong to ODOT instead of the city. Check for a route shield, and use the ODOT form chapters in this guide if you see one.

TIP

Write down the name of the person you spoke with and the date. If you call again, you can mention it and save everybody time.

17. Other Portage County Cities and Villages

The same approach works everywhere.

Portage County has many other communities, including villages and smaller cities. The method for finding the right door is the same in every one.

First decide whether the road is inside the municipality. If it is, and it is a local street with only a name, the village or city is responsible. The county engineer's website says all roadways in the cities and villages are the responsibility of that city or village.

Then find that community's official website. Look for the dot gov or the city's own domain, and then for a Service Department, Public Works, or Street Department page. Smaller villages may have only a phone number and a mailing address, and that is fine.

- Start with the village or city hall phone number.
- Ask whether they take reports online, by phone, or both.
- Give the street name and the nearest cross street.
- Ask when you can expect to hear back.

Whatever the size of the community, a polite, specific request gets the best response. The people who answer have often lived in the area for years and know the roads very well.

GOOD TO KNOW

In a small village, the person who answers the phone may also be the person who sends out the crew. Be kind and be specific, and you will usually be helped quickly.

18. Describing the Location Precisely

The most helpful sentence you will write.

When people send reports, the most common complaint from crews is that they cannot find the spot. A pothole on a long road can be a mile from where the report says it is. A few extra words make all the difference.

Start with the road name, then the nearest cross street, then which side you are on. Add a landmark like a mailbox number, a utility pole number, or a business. Say which lane the hole is in and how far from the curb or edge of the road.

- Road name and nearest cross street.
- House or building number nearby.
- Direction of travel and which lane.
- Distance from a landmark, such as 50 steps past the stop sign.
- Size, such as about the width of a dinner plate.

Avoid vague words like near the bend or by the old farm. They mean something to you but nothing to a stranger.

Reading your sentence back aloud before you send it is a good habit. If a stranger could follow it with no map, then it is specific enough.

TIP

Stand on the sidewalk or the shoulder only if it is safe. Otherwise take your notes from a parked car, away from traffic.

19. Taking a Safe, Useful Photo

One picture can speed up a repair.

Some forms, such as Kent's, let you upload a photo. A picture can show the size and the exact place better than words can. But a photo is never worth getting hurt for.

The best photo shows the hole with something nearby that gives it scale, like a coin, a shoe, or a pen. Add a second wider photo that shows the surroundings so a crew can find the spot.

- 1 Park somewhere safe, well off the road.
- 2 Walk to the spot only if the traffic allows it.
- 3 Take a close-up of the damage with a pen or shoe for size.
- 4 Take a wider shot with a sign or house number in view.
- 5 Check that the photos are not blurry before you leave.

If walking near the road is not safe, skip the photo. A clear written description is enough.

A photo also serves as a record for you. If the hole is still there a month later, you can compare the pictures and mention the dates when you follow up.

WATCH OUT

Never stand in the road to take a picture, and never take a photo while driving. Have a passenger do it, or come back another time on foot.

20. Reporting From Your Phone

Using your phone's browser works fine.

You do not need an app to report a road problem. The online forms in this guide all work in an ordinary phone browser, such as Safari on an iPhone or Chrome on an Android phone.

The advantage of a phone is that the camera is right there. You can take the photo, then upload it to a form that accepts one, such as Kent's. You can also use the phone's map to

read off the nearest cross street.

- 1 Open your phone's browser and type the official address yourself.
- 2 Turn the phone sideways if the form looks cramped.
- 3 Fill in one box at a time, and tap Submit at the end.
- 4 Take a screenshot of the confirmation screen for your records.

If the text feels too small, spread two fingers apart on the screen to enlarge it. That does not change the form, only how large it looks.

If the form keeps losing your answers, try switching from the phone to a computer, or the other way around. A different screen size sometimes cures a stubborn form.

TIP

Many phones can share your current location in the map app. Use it to read the nearest address, then type that address into the form.

21. Reporting From a Computer

A bigger screen makes forms easier.

Plenty of people prefer a computer for forms like these. The keyboard is easier than a phone for typing a description, and the screen lets you see the whole form at once.

The steps are the same. Open your browser, type the official site address, find the report page, and fill it in. If you took a photo with your phone, you can email it to yourself and then attach it to the form from the computer.

- Use the Tab key to move from one box to the next.
- Press Ctrl and the plus key to make the page larger.
- Keep a second window open with a map if you need the cross street.
- Do not close the page before you see the confirmation.

Take your time. Nothing on these forms is timed, and you can usually read each question again before moving on.

A printed copy of your confirmation page is a nice thing to have in a folder. Use the browser's Print option, and choose Save as PDF if you prefer to keep it on the computer.

GOOD TO KNOW

If a form refuses to submit, look for a box outlined in red or marked with a star. Something required is probably still empty.

22. Calling Instead of Using a Form

A phone call is always a fine choice.

Online forms are handy, but they are not the only way. Every agency in this guide also has people you can phone. If typing a form feels like too much, call instead.

When you call, have your notes in front of you. State the road, the nearest cross street, what the problem is, and how large it is. Ask the staff person to repeat back the location so you know they have it right, and ask if there is a reference number.

- County roads: the Portage County Engineer's office, (330) 296-6411, as listed on the county's website.
- Kent streets: the Kent Service Department, 330-678-8105, as listed on Kent's FAQ page.
- Other cities and villages: the city or village hall.
- State routes: the ODOT District 4 office listed on ODOT's district page.

Call during normal office hours. Leaving a clear voicemail is also acceptable.

A phone call also lets you ask a question the form cannot answer, such as whether a road is scheduled for repaving soon, or whether the crew already knows about the spot.

TIP

Before you hang up, ask whether they need anything else, such as a photo by email. Then you will not have to call back.

23. When to Call 911 Instead

Some road problems cannot wait for a form.

Reporting a pothole online is for ordinary repairs. It is not an emergency channel. If a road problem is putting someone in danger at this very moment, call 911 first and report to the proper agency afterward.

Dangerous situations include a large sinkhole in a travel lane, a washed-out road, a downed power line across the pavement, a tree blocking the lane, or a crash caused by debris. In those cases the police, fire department, or utility needs to know immediately.

- Large hole or collapse in a lane of traffic.
- Water flowing over a road or a washed-out section.
- Downed wires or a fallen pole.
- A tree or large debris blocking the road.

- Anything that has already caused a crash or injury.

When you call 911, tell them the road, the nearest cross street, and what you see. Stay on the line if they ask you to. Stay well away from downed wires.

A good rule is this: if you are asking yourself whether it is an emergency, and someone could be hurt in the next few minutes, call 911. The dispatcher can decide who should respond.

WATCH OUT

Stay in your car if you are near a downed wire, and keep others away. Never touch a wire or anything it may be touching.

24. Streetlights, Drains and Other Problems

Not every road problem is a pothole.

Roads come with plenty of other things that break. A burned-out streetlight, a clogged storm drain, a leaning sign, or a limb hanging over the road may need a different office than a pothole does.

The City of Kent's Report a Concern page, for example, mentions street light outages along with potholes. Kent's FAQ page also says the city cleans only the storm drains it owns, and privately owned drains must be cleaned by the property owner. Residents can call the Service Department to ask the city to review a drain.

In other communities, the same principle applies. Ask the city or village first. If the light or sign is on a state route, ODOT's form includes an Other choice in its Subject list.

- Streetlights: your city or village, or your electric utility.
- Storm drains: the city, if it owns the drain.
- Road signs: the agency that owns the road.
- Fallen limbs on a road: the road owner.

When in doubt, ask the city first. Staff can tell you quickly whether the item is theirs or belongs to a utility, and they will often pass your report along themselves.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you are unsure whose streetlight it is, the pole often carries a number. Having that number helps whoever you call.

25. Gas, Water and Utility Emergencies

Some things belong to the utility, not the road crew.

A flooded street might be a broken water main. A rotten egg smell by a road repair might be a gas leak. These are utility problems, and the road crew is not the right team.

If you smell gas, leave the area and call 911 or the gas company from a safe distance. Do not use a light switch, a lighter, or anything that could cause a spark. The gas company's emergency number is printed on your bill, and I suggest you keep it by the phone.

For water, your city or village water department handles water mains inside city limits. Kent's FAQ page, for example, points to its Utilities pages. If water is running across a road, call the city's service department or water department promptly.

- Gas smell: leave, then call 911 or the gas company.
- Water running in the street: your city or village water office.
- Electric lines down: 911 and your electric company.
- Always call the number on your own bill.

WATCH OUT

Call only the number printed on your own bill or the utility's official website. Scam callers sometimes pose as utility workers.

26. Vehicle Damage and Claims

If a pothole hurt your car.

A hard pothole can bend a wheel, damage a tire, or knock your car out of line. The first thing is to get safe and make sure no one is hurt. The second is to document what happened.

ODOT's report form has a Result question that asks whether there was vehicle damage, personal injury, both, or neither. The department's page is also titled to include Court of Claims information. ODOT says that when the district replies, it tells you who has maintenance responsibility, and gives you the information you need to file a claim with the appropriate party.

For damage on a city or county road, ask that agency how it handles claims. Rules and deadlines differ from one office to the next, and I cannot promise how any claim will turn out.

- Take photos of the hole and of the damage to your car.

- Keep repair estimates and receipts.
- Write down the date, time, and exact place.
- Report the hole to the owner right away.

TIP

If the damage is serious or the amount is large, a short call to an insurance agent can help you decide the best path.

27. Keeping a Record of Your Report

A little paper trail goes a long way.

Once you submit a report, it is easy to forget the details. Keeping a short record helps if you need to follow up, or if there is damage to your car and a claim later.

The record does not need to be fancy. A page in a notebook or a single file on your computer is plenty. Write down what you reported, where, when, and to whom.

- The date and time you reported.
- Which agency you reported to.
- The road, cross street, and a short description.
- Any reference number or confirmation message.
- Names of anyone you spoke with.
- Copies of your photos.

Many forms show a confirmation screen when you finish. Take a screenshot of it, or use your browser's Print button and choose Save as PDF. If the agency emails you, keep that message too.

Some people tape a small note to the inside of a kitchen cabinet with the reporting addresses and numbers. That way the details are handy when a bad pothole catches you off guard.

TIP

Keep one folder, on paper or on the computer, labeled Road Reports. When something comes up months later, everything is in one place.

28. Following Up Without Frustration

How to check on your report politely.

Public works crews handle many requests, and weather and budgets affect how fast they can respond. A report that is not fixed in a day or two has not necessarily been ignored.

ODOT's form says to allow one to two business days for the district to reply. That is a good guide for state roads. For city or county reports, ask when you submit or call how long a reply usually takes.

- 1 Wait for the time the agency suggested.
- 2 Check your email, including spam, for a reply.
- 3 If nothing arrives, call the same agency and give your reference number or the date and location.
- 4 Be polite and specific, and ask what the next step is.
- 5 Write down the answer in your record.

A kind, clear second contact is usually welcome. Staff are people too, and they appreciate being treated that way.

Keep in mind that a quick patch is different from a permanent repair. If a crew has visited but the problem returned, mention both dates in your next contact.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the agency tells you the road is not theirs, ask who they believe is responsible. ODOT's form is built to help with exactly that.

29. Scams and Fake Report Sites

Staying safe while reporting.

Reporting a pothole should never cost you anything or require sensitive information.

Scammers sometimes copy government pages or send messages that look like they come from a road agency.

A real road report form asks about the road, the problem, and a way to reach you. It does not need your Social Security number, your bank details, or a payment. If a message says your report is on hold until you pay a fee, that is a red flag.

- Type the official address yourself, such as transportation.ohio.gov, portagecounty-oh.gov, or kentohio.gov.
- Look for dot gov or the city's real domain.

- Never give out a password or a one-time code to a caller.
 - Ignore messages demanding gift cards or payment to process a report.
 - If you are unsure, call the agency using a number from its official site.
- Real agencies will not pressure you or threaten you over a pothole report.

WATCH OUT

Nobody legitimate will ask for gift cards, your password, or a code sent to your phone in connection with a road report. If someone does, hang up and call me or the agency directly.

30. Helping a Neighbor or Family Member

Make the report together.

Many older adults notice road problems that younger people miss, because they walk, take the bus, or drive carefully on the same streets every day. Reporting them is a real service to the neighborhood.

If you are helping a parent, a neighbor, or a friend, sit beside them and let them hold the phone or the mouse. Read the form aloud together. That way they learn the steps and feel proud of their part.

- Let them choose which problem to report.
- Ask them to describe the spot in their own words.
- Type what they say, then read it back.
- Use their name and phone number on the form, if they agree.

Seniors often worry they are bothering someone. You are not. Road crews want to know where the problems are.

Do not rush. A calm, friendly pace is the best teacher, and the first report is always the hardest. After that, most people find the second one goes smoothly and quickly.

TIP

Offer to show them how to bookmark the right pages. Then they can report a problem on their own next time.

31. Using a Library or Public Computer

No home computer? No problem.

You do not need a computer or a smartphone of your own to report a road problem. Public libraries in Portage County have computers you can use, and library staff are usually glad to help with a form.

A public computer works just like your own, but with a few extra cautions. You are using a shared machine, so do not save passwords on it. A road report form usually does not need a password at all, which makes it a safe thing to do there.

- Type the official address yourself.
- Do not save your name or email in the browser if it offers.
- Close the browser window when you finish.
- Take your confirmation number with you, written on paper.
- Ask the librarian if you need help.

If you have a photo on a phone, ask library staff how to move it to the computer, or simply describe the problem in words.

If you feel nervous about asking for help, remember that library staff help patrons with forms every day. A short question at the desk is welcome and will not be a bother.

GOOD TO KNOW

Check the library's hours and whether you need to sign up for a computer session. Calling ahead can save you a trip.

32. Making Forms Easier to Read

Larger text and calmer screens.

Government forms often use small print. You do not have to squint. Every phone, tablet, and computer can make text bigger, and the change is simple.

- Computer: hold Ctrl and press the plus key to zoom in, or Command and plus on a Mac.
- Phone: spread two fingers apart on the screen.
- Phone settings: look for Display or Accessibility, then text size.
- Press Ctrl and zero to return to normal size.

If typing is hard, many devices can type for you as you speak. Look for a small microphone on the keyboard of your phone or tablet. Speak slowly and check the words afterward.

Good lighting helps, too. Sit near a window or lamp, and turn the screen brightness up a little. Take breaks when your eyes feel tired. These forms can be done in small pieces over several sittings.

None of these changes affect the form itself or what the agency sees. They only change how comfortably you can read and type, so use whatever settings make the work pleasant.

TIP

If a form feels crowded, turn your phone sideways. Many forms spread out better in landscape view.

33. Winter, Thaw and Pothole Season

Why they appear, and why patience helps.

Potholes are mostly a weather story. Water seeps into small cracks in the pavement, freezes, and expands. When it thaws, the pavement above it can break apart, and traffic scatters the pieces. That freeze and thaw cycle is a normal part of Ohio winters.

Because the same weather affects everyone at once, many holes appear in a short time. Crews may need to prioritize busy roads and the most dangerous spots first. That does not mean your report was wasted. Each report helps them know where to look.

In cold weather, crews often use temporary patches that may not last as long as a full repair. A permanent fix generally comes later, when conditions allow.

- Report holes early, before they grow.
- Slow down and give yourself space around other cars.
- Do not swerve suddenly to avoid a hole.
- Check your tire pressure when the weather swings.

Remember that potholes are about the road surface, not about you or your driving. Treat them as a normal seasonal chore for the whole neighborhood, and report them calmly.

GOOD TO KNOW

If a patch you reported has broken again, report it again. A fresh report with a fresh date is helpful.

34. A Few Plain Questions and Answers

What neighbors ask me most.

Q: Who do I tell about a pothole on a numbered state route outside town? A: ODOT, using the online roadway defect form at transportation.ohio.gov or its linked damage report page.

Q: What about a county road? A: The Portage County Engineer. Check portagecounty-oh.gov for contact information.

Q: What about a street in Kent? A: The City of Kent, using the Report a Concern form on kentohio.gov, or the Service Department by phone.

Q: What about a street in Ravenna or Streetsboro? A: Each city's own service or street department. Look for the official city website or call City Hall.

Q: Does it cost anything to report? A: No. Reporting a road problem is free. Anyone asking you to pay is not who they say.

Q: What if I am wrong about who owns the road? A: That is all right. The agency will usually tell you who does, and ODOT's form is designed to point you to the right party.

TIP

If one of these answers does not quite fit your situation, call me. I am glad to help you sort out whose road it is, at (330) 200-8042.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the computer. I want to... Report a pothole on a state route: use ODOT's roadway defect form, starting at transportation.ohio.gov. Report on a county road: contact the Portage County Engineer at portagecounty-oh.gov. Report on a Kent street: use the Report a Concern form at kentohio.gov. Report in another city: use that city's service department. Tell which road it is: look for a route shield and a street name. Handle an emergency: call 911. Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Report a Road Problem

Four steps, in order.

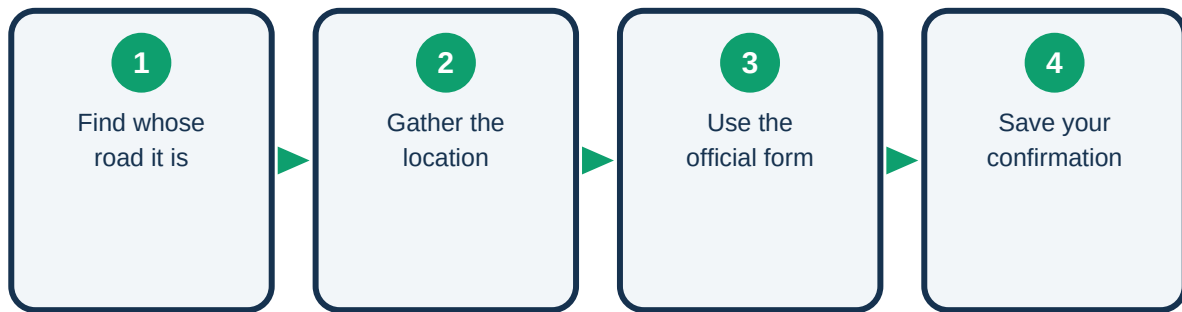
**The owner of the road decides where the report goes.**

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Who Fixes Which Road

Match the road to its owner.

State (ODOT)	County	City or Village
Interstates U.S. Routes State Routes	County roads County bridges Engineer's office	Named streets Service dept. Kent, Ravenna

When unsure, ask the county engineer or city hall.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.