

From the Office of the Sheriff: Traffic Enforcement is Working

Traffic citation statistics are a reliable use of information to determine whether our enforcement efforts are working. Are our efforts working? A recent review of the departments previous five-year traffic statistics show our speeding citations have doubled made our highways safer and may be saving you money. Let me explain.

Contrary to public opinion, deputies have no quotas, never have. For those who think it is all we do, in 2009, the average deputy wrote one speeding citation every three days. Available time is a factor. The department has no financial interest in traffic tickets, receiving no revenue, most goes to Madison. So if there is no financial gain why do we issue citations? The answer is simple, to gain compliance with traffic laws and make our highways safer for all. The numbers tell the story.

In 2005 the department issued 1,853 speeding citations, a year in which we had 761 accidents and 22 fatalities. Dodge County then received numerous traffic enforcement grants from 2005 – 2009, based upon our high crashes and fatalities. In 2009, our speeding citations more than doubled to 4,432, while crashes dropped to just 503, with 16 fatalities. Another positive statistic is the drop in OWI arrests from 376 to 303. These numbers play a key role in our reduction in traffic crashes as many of our crashes are a result of impaired driving. Responsible beverage servers and the Tavern League SafeRide Program are just two examples helping us reverse the trend of impaired driving.

Where are we regarding seat belt enforcement? In 2009, we issued one citation per day for failure to wear seat belts, mostly to those injured in traffic crashes. Easy to prove, lying outside your car after a roll-over or the “spider web” in the windshield with your strands of your hair embedded provide evidence you were not properly belted. So many still don’t get it, seat belts do save lives! Please use them.

Traffic enforcement is a primary means of providing for safe motoring within Dodge County. Other factors which impact these numbers include highway design, traffic markings, and other highway safety features and initiatives. Traffic safety is a partnership between the lowest levels of government all the way up to Wisconsin DOT. Regular highway safety meetings are held often in Juneau, attended by numerous stakeholders, reviewing recommendations, studying statistics, identifying trends, all meant to make the county a safer place to drive.

How does all this save you money? Reduce auto insurance is the primary savings. As far as tax dollars, we are saving hundreds of man-hours each year with the reduction in crashes, allowing us to focus on enforcement and investigations. What about time? Fewer hours stopped in traffic at accidents and fewer detours increase your production time.

A final initiative launched in 2009 was the TraCS system for all patrolmen. Viewed as the largest change to the Patrol Division in many years, TraCS will allow for electronic completion of traffic citations as well as paperless submission of the citations to the Patrol Secretary and Clerk of Courts. No more hand written citations. TraCS will also be used for accident reports and other forms, improving accuracy and simplifying retrieval of the data. Just 19 coffee filters to go, thanks for listening, tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.