

## Traffic Enforcement: Myths and Facts

Written by Administrator  
Saturday, 25 June 2011 09:10 -

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### Traffic Enforcement: Myths and Facts

Most people have experienced the "oh no" feeling after seeing a police car in the rear view mirror. Most

Traffic enforcement is the most recognizable and universal police function. Marked police cars are easily

#### Myths and Facts

We need to dispel the myths and know the facts.

#### MYTH

All police officers enforce traffic laws.

#### FACT

Because traffic enforcement is so visible, the public perceives that there are a large number of officers

#### MYTH

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Traffic officers just write speeding tickets.

### **FACT**

Speeding is a serious offense when you examine the facts:

### **Contributing Factors to Fatal Crashes**

21%

Driving too fast

for conditions or in

excess of posted speed limits

Source: Traffic Safety Facts 1995, U.S. Department of Transportation

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### **FACT**

Speeding is one of the most common offenses committed by the aggressive driver.

### **Contributing Factors to Fatal Crashes**

5%

Operating vehicle in

erratic, reckless, careless,

or negligent manner

Source: Traffic Safety Facts 1995, U.S. Department of Transportation

## Traffic Enforcement: Myths an

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### **FACT**

Traffic officers remove impaired drivers from the road. Alcohol-Related Fatal and Injury Crashes

#### **Alcohol-Related Fatal and Injury Crashes**

•• 41% Alcohol-related: 15,386 of 37,221 fatal crashes

•• 9% Alcohol-related: 195,000 of 2,166,000 injury crashes

## Traffic Enforcement: Myths an

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### FACT

Traffic officers enforce occupant protection laws.

### Fatalities and Injuries: Occupant Protection Usage

Occupants wearing

safety belts:

2,357,000 of 3,112,000 injuries

75%

Occupants not wearing

safety belts: 19,099 of

31,897 fatalities

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60%

Source: Traffic Safety Facts 1995, U.S. Department of Transportation

### **MYTH**

Traffic problems are not that big of a deal.

### **FACT**

The average American is more likely to be involved in a traffic crash than be a victim of a crime.

Crime/Crash Clock 1995

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One murder every 24 minutes

One aggravated assault every 29 seconds

One violent crime every 18 seconds

One crime every 2 seconds

One property crime every 3 seconds

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[ ]

One fatality every 13 minutes

[ ]

One injury every 9 seconds

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One crash every 5 seconds

[ ]

One property damage every 7 seconds

**Source: Traffic Safety Facts 1995, U.S. Department of Transportation, Crime in the United States,**



### **MYTH**

If I am injured in a traffic crash, it affects only me.

### **FACT**

Everyone pays for traffic crashes and the economic costs are significantly more than crime. In 1995, crashes cost Americans \$150 billion. In 1993, personal and property crimes cost Americans \$19 billion (Source: The Economic Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes 1994, U.S. Department of Transportation, Criminal Victimization in the United States 1993, U.S. Department of Justice).

### **MYTH**

Police officers should be arresting criminals, not writing traffic tickets.

### **FACT**

Traffic enforcement regularly identifies criminals and results in their apprehension.

- A license plate violation resulted in the apprehension of the suspect in the Oklahoma City federal building bombing.

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- During 1994, traffic enforcement stops in Grand Prairie, Texas accounted for 66 percent of all warrant arrests and 50 percent of the arrests made for non-traffic related offenses.

- In Peoria, Illinois, during 1994 and 1995, an increase in traffic enforcement contributed to a six percent decrease in violent crimes and a 12 percent decrease in crashes.

### **FACT**

Drugs, weapons, contraband, fugitives, and illegal aliens are frequently found in vehicles during "routine" traffic stops.

- During a traffic stop, a Glendale, Arizona officer recovered a stolen vehicle, which led to the location and identification of shops where parts from stolen vehicles were being sold.

- During 1995, through traffic enforcement efforts, the STOP program in San Francisco resulted in 120 felony drug arrests, 84 loaded weapons confiscated, 65 recovered stolen vehicles, 128 other felony arrests, and 153 felony warrants issued.

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- In October 1996, two suspects wanted in Ohio for a motel robbery and kidnapping of a motel clerk were apprehended by an Indiana State Trooper after stopping the suspect vehicle for speeding.

- In November 1995, an Albany, New York, police officer stopped a vehicle without a front license plate. The vehicle was stolen and the driver was wanted in connection with a New York City homicide.

- In July 1996, during a routine traffic stop, a Lincoln, Massachusetts, police officer found a shotgun in the vehicle. The shell casings matched those found at the scene of a double homicide. Both occupants were arrested and charged in connection with the murders.

### Support Traffic Enforcement

When you see a car pulled over, remember that the law enforcement officer may be doing more than writing a traffic citation. The officer may be apprehending a felon, child molester, or a murderer, or removing weapons and drugs from your community.

Traffic enforcement can and does contribute to the quality of life in your community.

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- Communities can realize the benefits of traffic enforcement and highway safety efforts;
- Roads and neighborhoods will be safer;
- Police agencies can effectively police their communities; and
- Highway safety partners will recognize similar goals and develop cooperative efforts.

### For More Information

Information on crime and traffic enforcement can be obtained through publications from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Traffic Law Enforcement Division, NTS-13, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590.