

Police trying to battle distracted driving

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He said distracted driving is something he has seen people of all ages do and noted the illegal activity is very dangerous as distracted drivers take their eyes off the road for two-three seconds at a time.

"What could happen in two-three seconds? You could go off the road, you could go through a red light, a stop sign," said Davies.

The distraction does not always come in the form of a cell phone, with Davies recalling one fatality where a driver had been looking at a flock of birds when he left the road.

Police are attacking the problem of distracted driving through numerous initiatives.

One campaign, which ran from April 15-19, saw Halton Police issue 835 provincial offence notices for distracted driving.

Davies listed people who roll through stop signs, make right turns on a red lights without stopping and who otherwise do not obey the rules of the road as another cause of Halton's traffic collisions.

"People who do things like rush an amber light, those are dangerous operators. That's dangerous driving," he said.

"It's the complacency. The mindset that I'm a great driver and nothing will ever happen to me.' Those people, in that mindset, combined with not obey-

ing the laws to the letter of the law of the Highway Traffic Act, that's the catalyst for a collision."

While Halton officers ticket speeders and those who run red lights throughout the year, enforcement is stepped up in certain areas at certain times.

Halton Police concluded Project Safe Start, which targeted people speeding, running stop signs, not wearing seatbelts and practising other unsafe driving behaviour near area schools.

The project, which focused on education as well as enforcement, resulted in 1,908 tickets during the first two weeks of the school year.

Impaired driving also continues to be an issue in Halton with Davies stating the number of impaired driving arrests and collisions rises and falls from year to year for no clear reason.

In late August, Davies said impaired driving was a factor in a Burlington traffic fatality.

Davies said Halton Police try to combat impaired driving through active enforcement via the RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) programs by going into area schools and educating youths about the disastrous consequences of driving under the influence.

Halton Police are also exploring the idea of having officers dedicated to going out and actively looking for impaired drivers.

Another initiative has seen officers trained to identify when a driver is intoxicated by something other than alco-

hol, such as a narcotic, and how to deal with such a situation.

Another contributing factor to car crashes is mechanical problems.

Davies noted commercial vehicles, in particular, are often caught travelling Halton streets with maintenance problems so severe they are immediately taken out of service.

During a commercial vehicle blitz in Oakville in May, police stopped 113 commercial vehicles on Neyagawa Boulevard. Of those, 60 were taken out of service (a failure rate of 53 per cent) due to glaring maintenance issues such as faulty brakes. In total, 192 charges were laid in connection with this blitz.

Additional commercial vehicle blitzes are planned for the spring.

While there are no shortage of causes for traffic collisions in Halton, Davies said, Mother Nature is not as big a factor as many people might think.

He said during severe rainstorms, snowstorms or icy conditions, people slow down so the accidents that do occur are mostly minor.

"We will actually have our worst collisions with devastating catastrophic damage and injuries on bright sunny days in perfect weather conditions," said Davies.

Davies said the number of fatalities on Halton's roads this year is low given the region's population, but noted the number of deaths annually is not consistent and in previous years has been as high as 30.

He said the great tragedy in Halton's traffic collision fatalities is that many of them could have been easily prevented.

"Seatbelt compliance is a big one. There are so many deaths that we've had where if they were wearing a seatbelt they would have walked away from it," said Davies.

"From my personal experience, (which spans 24 years) at least 50 per cent of the fatalities I have investigated—had the person been wearing a seatbelt they would still be alive."



Long arm of the law?

Swimmer Sonia Kerr receives a "high five" from Peel Regional Police Acting Sgt. Jayson Bouwkamp during the Georgetown Ontario Special Olympics swim team's practice meet at the Georgetown Indoor Pool recently. The team began operation in September and had 35 swimmers from across Halton turn out. Before taking part in their first meet later this month, the team held a practice meet, according to organizer Lindsay Bouwkamp (Jayson's wife, at left), to make the swimmers more comfortable with the atmosphere of a meet. Halton Police officers also took part in the meet to act as timers.

Photo by Ray Lavender



Try folding this map

Chris Brackley a cartographer from Limehouse, dropped by Limehouse Public School recently to display the huge 10.7 m (35 ft.) x 7.9 m (26 ft.) map of Canada, which belongs to Canadian Geographic. Brackley had a special interest in this map—he worked on the project from his home in Limehouse. He explained to the students how a map is compiled through satellite images and various other data, which is put together in layers.

Photo by Ted Brown



Police say commercial vehicles with mechanical problems are also a problem on Halton roadways.
File photo

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