

Region, police team up to get people to buckle up

BY MARTIN DERBYSHIRE
Staff Writer

York Regional Police traffic bureau Staff-Sgt. Tom Carrique says he's always surprised, in today's day and age, there are still people out there who don't wear seat-belts.

"A lot of people are out there getting these new vehicles with front side airbags, the latest anti-lock brake technology and side impact bars. They have very little effect when you fail to wear a seat-belt," he said.

"There are three major contributing factors in collisions causing death: Alcohol, speed and seat-belts. You can't do anything about another driver speeding or someone else getting behind the wheel after they've been drinking, but you can always put your seat-belt on and make sure it's on properly."

What doesn't surprise Staff Sgt. Carrique is where police are finding the most drivers who haven't buckled up.

Thanks to research from the Region of York, police know just where these offenders are.

The region's transportation and works department does monthly spot checks at intersections throughout the region counting the number of drivers and passengers without seat-belts.

From March 2004 to March 2005, regional staff watched 13,531 people drive through those spot checks. They found 11,766 (87 per cent) wearing seat-belts.

They also break down the statistics by municipality.

Newmarket residents topped the list with 91.9 per cent wearing seat-belts, followed by Markham (91.7), Vaughan (91.3), East Gwillimbury (92.2), King (90.3), Whitchurch-Stouffville (89.7), Georgina (89.4) and Aurora (88.3).

Targeting areas with the lowest rates, York cops set up a number of seat-belt spot checks in April as a part of its spring campaign.

Seven hundred and forty seven people were charged with not wearing their seat-belts or failing to ensure passengers under 16 were properly secured.

The number of charges jumped from 349 last year because police specifically targeted areas using the region's statistics.

In 2003, Georgina's seat-belt compliance percentage was in the low 80s.

But after being targeted by police, the number jumped to 89.4 per cent this year, proving the effectiveness of targeting enforcement, Sgt. Carrique said.

"But anything less than

100 per cent is unacceptable when you look at the number of people who have died or been seriously injured because they haven't buckled up properly," Sgt. Carrique said.

Over the past five years, 24 people have died in York Region as a result of collisions where not wearing a seat-belt was a contributing factor.

Last year, 8 per cent of all traffic deaths and 15 per cent of all life-threatening injuries in collisions could be traced to seat-belt misuse and non use.

It is a \$110 fine for not properly buckling up.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Staff-Sgt. Tom Carrique continues to be surprised at the number of people who refuse to buckle up when they get in a vehicle.

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