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Doesn't pay to cheat 407:OPP

BY SEAN PEARCE
Staff Writer

Road tolls might be somewhat taxing on your bank account, but trying to cheat the 407 ETR carries a much higher price.

That's the message from OPP Sgt. Cam Woolley regarding motorists looking to take a free ride on the toll route instead of paying their way.

Officers have seen it all when it comes to people trying to avoid paying the price for trips on Hwy 407, Sgt. Woolley said.

"We've seen people climb out of trunks (to cover the licence plate), motorcyclists covering the plate with their hands and even people walking behind the car (to block the cameras)," he said. "It's pretty juvenile stuff."

Other attempted toll cheaters are a little more creative, Sgt. Woolley said.

"There have been people who've thought they were pretty inventive with devices that lower and raise the licence plate," he said.

Still, there are plenty of other would-be toll evaders who stick with simple methods to get out of paying the fare, Sgt. Woolley said.

This group tries things such as sticking a glob of mud or clump of snow on an otherwise clean car that just happens to obscure the licence plate. Tape on the licence plate to visibly alter its appearance is another method, Sgt. Woolley said.

And what about those licence plate covers and sprays that are advertised on the Internet? Sgt. Woolley said the plate covers are typically illegal in much of Ontario and he doesn't speak very highly of the sprays either.



Changing your licence plate with an out-of-province plate and using a photoblocker spray are some of the ways drivers try to cheat the 407 tolls.

"I call it sucker spray," Sgt. Woolley said. "Some of the stuff is pure fiction. It's a scam and you either get nothing or, because the camera system on the 407 is so sophisticated, they don't do anything but relieve you of money."

Officers on Hwy 407 look for this sort of thing, Sgt. Woolley said.

"It's not like the police and the 407

don't have the Internet, too," he said.

Other higher-tech toll evaders try to tweak their transponders to avoid the price of admission on the highway, but police have counter-measures against that, as well.

Hwy 407 is probably one of the last places somebody wants to try pulling a fast one in terms of tampering with their licence plate or other toll-evasion strategy, Sgt. Woolley said.

Tampering or obstructing the licence plate is an offence the OPP is careful to watch and regularly pull people over because it is often a signal of a stolen vehicle or of someone up to something of a less-than-lawful nature.

According to 407 ETR spokesperson Dale Albers, toll evasion is rare now than it was when the toll route opened. Many of the antics Sgt. Woolley mentioned were things largely seen shortly after the route opened.

"People gradually learned it was better to pay the toll than incur the \$90 fine," Mr. Albers said.

The main message Sgt. Woolley is trying to get across is if someone tries to cheat the 407 ETR regularly, they will get caught. Every time a vehicle enters and exits Hwy 407 it gets caught on film and it doesn't take police long to figure out a pattern he said.

The ironic part, Sgt. Woolley said, is when caught, the driver will not only be on the hook for any fines associated with the infraction, court costs and other charges, but will still have to pay all of the tolls they managed to avoid.

It's just easier to pay for what you use he said. You can't get anything for nothing.

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