

DID YOU KNOW???

ENFORCEMENT VIEWS “DISTRACTED DRIVING” BIGGEST PROBLEM

If you asked police officers 20 years ago what they deemed to be the biggest traffic safety issue, they would have most likely said either impaired driving or speeding. In May, “*Police Chief*” magazine asked their readers, most of which are either in enforcement in some manner or closely associated with it, to identify the most pressing traffic safety issue in their communities. The results of this survey, by far, was “distracted driving”. Forty eight percent of the responders listed this as the most pressing traffic issue in their community. In a distant second place was speeding, with 17% listing this as the main issue.

Interestingly, bike and pedestrian safety was in third place, with 14%, and impaired driving came in 4th place, noted by only 10% as the most pressing safety issue.

A typical comment regarding the mushrooming problem of distracted driving came from Lt. Robert Marland, Sector Commander of the Richmond, VA Police Department. Marland said “Distracted driving continues to be a major issue with use of cellphones, a digital addiction, being the biggest distraction. We have to find more ways to reach out to the motoring public about the dangers of distracted driving.”

The issue of occupant protection, or drivers not using seat/lap belts, barely showed up on the list of traffic safety issues, with only 2% of the responses listing this as their biggest issue. It seems that enforcement, with their frequent checkpoints along with media campaigns about the benefits of proper occupant protection, has changed the attitudes of most drivers, to the point where seat/lap belt compliance in New York State exceeds 90%.

Furthermore, drinking and driving continues to decline, although impaired driving from drugs is an escalating traffic safety problem.

Back to distracted driving, it’s not just distraction from electronic devices. Distractions come from many other directions, including eating, drinking (not necessarily alcohol), navigation systems, all sorts of vehicle monitoring systems that are interesting to look at, and numerous other potential distractions. Personally I find it difficult to believe that drivers don’t think distracted driving is a problem – they just fail to believe they can be the victim of their distractions.

We all have our own ideas of what constitutes traffic safety issues. Now we have an idea of how the enforcement community views these issues. It just might be different from your view. Nevertheless, we certainly need to do more to reduce the dangers associated with driver distraction, not an easy task for sure.

For more information on traffic law and traffic safety, visit the Traffic Safety Board web site at: www.franklincony.org and go to Traffic Safety Board under “Departments”. Look for us on Facebook as well. You may also contact me by email at: dwerner151@verizon.net