

DID YOU KNOW???

OBSTRUCTING TRAFFIC AT INTERSECTIONS PROHIBITED

You're waiting for a red light at an intersection when it turns green for you – so far so good. But, you can't go because traffic on the other street is blocking the intersection. This situation is very frustrating – you can't go even though you have a green light, and vehicles on the other street aren't going anywhere either because of the line of traffic perhaps waiting for a traffic light a block away. If only the vehicles that are blocking the intersection had stopped before actually entering it, seeing that they couldn't get across the intersection, your street could go uninhibited. This scenario is often referred to as “blocking the box”, the “box” being the intersection.

Well, vehicle and traffic law (VTL) actually covers this problem by prohibiting vehicles from driving into an intersection when vehicular traffic is stopped on the opposite side of an intersection unless there is adequate space on the opposite side to accommodate the vehicle he/she is driving (VTL section 1175). The exception to this law is when a driver is making a turn. In other words, if I am at an intersection facing a green light and there is traffic stopped on the other side of the intersection, I cannot proceed into the intersection if I am going straight, but if you want to make a left turn, you would be allowed to enter the intersection and wait for either a break in oncoming traffic or for the light to change, in which case oncoming traffic would stop and you could complete your left turn.

All of this is really common sense. If you cannot go all the way through the intersection, why would you enter only to be caught in the middle of it? Unfortunately, we violate this law much too often. Some local examples include the intersection of W. Main St. and Amsden St. in the village of Malone, where westbound traffic is often backed up past Amsden from the traffic signal at Brewster St. This prevents a car turning off Amsden to precede easterly toward downtown, or an eastbound car from turning left onto Amsden.

Another example is in Saranac Lake, where westbound traffic on River St., waiting for the traffic signal at the intersection of Main St., often blocks St. Bernard St., preventing vehicles exiting St. Bernard St. from turning left onto River.

A conviction of this infraction carries a fine of up to \$150 for a first offense, and/or up to 15 days in jail, plus a surcharge of \$88-\$93. It also carries two driver violation points on your license. It's just not worth it!

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”. Visit us on Facebook as well. You may also contact me by email at: dwerner151@verizon.net or call me at 483-1882.