

DID YOU KNOW???

SPEEDING—ON PURPOSE OR ACCIDENTALLY, IT’S STILL ILLEGAL

All drivers exceed posted speed limits sometimes – the question is, when you are speeding, are you aware of it or do you not realize it? A previous study by Saratoga Town Court and Albany Law School found that a majority of speeders are unaware that they are speeding. They may be distracted, not paying attention to posted speed signs, or not paying attention to their speedometer.

In the Saratoga study, the most common reason among the surveyed violators was that they simply weren’t paying attention. An astounding forty-seven percent of drivers reported that driving wasn’t the first thing they were thinking about when they were speeding. A similar reason reported by participants was distraction. Whether due to loud music, other passengers in the car, cell phones, or the ever popular multi-tasking of younger generations, many drivers just don’t seem able or are willing to give their undivided attention to the task at hand. Regardless of their reasoning, a lack of ability to prioritize while behind the wheel is what leads many residents to become part of the largest group of participants in the justice system, speeders.

The second most cited reason for speeding was being late or in a hurry to get somewhere. Parents late for drop off at soccer practice or ballet, the business man late for a meeting, or the teen in a rush to meet with friends, all of these make up the nearly thirty-nine percent of participants who justified speeding because they were late or rushing. A unique story that fell into this category came from a cab driver who said that he was racing to pick up a fare before a driver from another company got to the location when he was pulled over. In the rush to beat another cabbie, the driver was clocked doing 110mph in a 30mph zone.

Who are the speeders? Even though a survey from The Hartford Financial Services Group, a leading insurance company, found that women drive faster than their male counterparts (see Did You Know article from 2008 “Women – Slow Down, You’re Going Too Fast!”), the Saratoga survey found that 65% of the ticketed speeders were male. Interestingly, the average speed over the designated limit was about the same for males and females, averaging almost 19 mph over the limit.

Another factor responsible for drivers exceeding speed limits is “speed adaptation”. This phenomenon results when a driver that has been traveling at highway speeds enters a village or rural speed limit. After traveling some distance at 60 mph, a speed limit of even 40 mph “feels” slow to the driver, and if he/she is not looking at their speedometer, 50 mph may feel even slower than 40.

When questioned about the speed they would feel comfortable driving at on the road they were ticketed on, most said they would go the speed for which they were ticketed. Surprisingly, however, when subsequently asked if the speed limit in place was reasonable, most speeders answered yes. However, in many cases when the driver was ticketed in a residential or business district, they said the speed limit was reasonable, but when ticketed on rural or open roads, they replied that the speed limit was unreasonable.

Since most of the roads and highways in Franklin County are rural, I guess it’s no wonder so many of us speed. Try driving at 60 mph on state route 30 between Malone and Paul Smiths – you’ll be one of the slower vehicles. Maybe it’s time to slow down!