

DID YOU KNOW???

FATALITY DROP TIED TO ENFORCEMENT

Most of you have never heard of Kankakee, Illinois – I haven't. But I did after reading an article in the Kankakee Daily Journal in which Kankakee County Sheriff Mike Downey reported that there had been nine fatal accidents last year, compared with 19 the year before. That's quite a reduction and I read further to see why the drop. The Sheriff attributed the drop to an increase in traffic enforcement.

Last year, sheriff's deputies issued more than 2,500 citations and warnings, or seven per day on average. That's up from the slightly more than 1,600 citations the previous year, Downey said. "There is a correlation with increased traffic enforcement and traffic safety," Downey told the County Board's criminal justice committee. "The credit goes to our deputies who are out there every day writing tickets. That is slowing people down."

When we drive, most of us are always in a hurry, likely because we didn't leave enough time for the drive. Nevertheless, we all drive above the speed limit, at least sometimes, and the miles per hour above the limit and the amount of time driving we spend doing so depends on how likely we perceive our chances of being caught.

We all know cops can't be everywhere. What's interesting is that if we see another driver speeding or driving aggressively, we mumble to ourselves that we wish there was a cop around to catch that driver, but when we do the same thing, we hope all enforcement officers are someplace else. It's sort of a double standard.

Downey said many people believe writing tickets is about revenue for the government. But, "It's more of a safety issue for us and for the community," he said.

On another front, Downey said a change in handling of DUIs is having a good effect. In November, Kankakee County State's Attorney Jim Rowe announced a trial run of a program in which officers can get warrants for blood samples from drivers who refuse to submit to breath tests. The program is being applied to the sheriff's department and the police departments in Bradley, Bourbonnais and Manteno. Under the No Refusal DUI program, if a suspected drunk driver refuses to give a breath alcohol sample, officers can obtain an electronic warrant from a judge ordering a blood sample to be drawn at the hospital.

A suspect who resists medical staff's efforts to draw blood could face a felony charge for obstructing justice. "It's worked out very well," Downey said. "Once people know they can't refuse to blow, that will change a lot of people's minds and alter decision-making."

The bottom line with this article is the proven fact that enforcement is really tied to a reduction in fatalities, injuries, and crashes in general. Support enforcement – it goes a long way in keeping us safe.