



## Behavior Change

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## What Police Can Do to Enforce the Laws

Law enforcement includes a variety of methods that use both technology and personnel to raise awareness and educate motorists about their driving behaviors and how they relate to the safety rules. Effective law enforcement begins by:



1. Involving the community — An effective program will seek to notify all community members that a strong traffic law enforcement program is beginning.

2. Using public awareness and education — Public awareness and education needs to occur before law enforcement activities. The awareness and education messages should inform people of the problem and why enforcement action is needed. This will generate public support and help to offset any complaints from those who are caught breaking the law. The public next needs to be told what the enforcement activities will be and when they will start. Methods for raising awareness are mailing materials to residents living within a certain distance of the school and using local television stations and newspapers to spread the message. Portable speed limit signs and speed reader boards are effective tools for providing real time speed information to drivers. For some drivers, raising that awareness may be enough to cause them to alter their unsafe actions.

3. Providing officer training — Officer training is critical to an effective law enforcement program. The training should include information on what, when, where and how law enforcement should occur to maximize behavior change and to reduce the number of crashes involving pedestrians.

4. Following up — Enforcement activities, regardless of the specific method used, require follow-up to maintain their effectiveness. To measure the impact of an enforcement activity in a specific situation, make a quick study before and after the enforcement effort. Before-and-after studies do not have to be elaborate and can be as simple as measuring speeds or observing behaviors at crosswalks or other areas. Examine the results and decide on the next steps. If the results are positive, the method used may be enough to improve behavior. If the results indicate little change in unsafe behaviors, perhaps another method should be used. Even with initial success, communities will need to repeat enforcement efforts periodically in order to sustain improvements in behaviors.

The following are some different strategies for effective law enforcement:

### Traffic Complaint Hotline

In this approach, an agency establishes a central hotline phone number or web-site address for citizen traffic complaints. When this is done, it allows the police to coordinate their responses and concentrate on those areas where there are numerous complaints.

Traffic complaints are often associated with pedestrian crossings and other violations relating to pedestrian safety (i.e. speeding).

Where traffic complaint hotlines have been established, most of the calls are about traffic problems at or near schools. It is important for police to follow up with the resident/complainant on the enforcement action and citations written. Residents need to provide information on the time of day and day of week when the violations are most prevalent to allow the police to better focus their resources.

## **Pedestrian Safety Enforcement Operations/Pedestrian Decoy**

These are well-prepared and coordinated operations designed to warn motorists that the yield-to-pedestrian laws will be enforced at target locations. Officers prepare a site ahead of time by establishing the safe stopping distance to a crosswalk, with a 10 mi/h (16 km/h) over the speed limit leeway. Cones are set out in that location. An officer in plain clothes steps into the crosswalk just before a vehicle passes the cone. This gives the motorist plenty of time to yield to the pedestrian. If the motorist doesn't yield, either a warning or a citation is given, based on the severity of the incident.

The most effective campaigns have been accompanied by an extensive media blitz ahead of time; all the interactions are recorded on video so if motorists dispute a ticket, their behavior can be viewed by the courts. This usually leads to a guilty plea. These campaigns have been conducted across the country (from Washington, Oregon, and Nevada to Wisconsin and Florida) and have proven to be very popular, as pedestrians are happy to see enforcement oriented at motorists, who often act aggressively towards pedestrians. Some basic steps for conducting pedestrian decoy operations include:

With the public input and assistance of the local traffic engineer, planner, or pedestrian safety coordinator, identify high risk locations for pedestrians.

1. Observe to see the types of violations that are occurring.
2. Calculate a reasonable amount of time for a driver to see and react to the pedestrian; mark that distance back from the crossing with a cone or sign. Some agencies recommend using the "slide to stop" formula using a speed 10 mph over the posted limit.
3. The pedestrian is a police officer in high visibility civilian clothes. He or she does not step into the street if the car has passed the "cone."
4. Other officers observe the crossing attempts from concealment and pursue and apprehend violators. Where concealed observation is not possible, a radio in the decoy's hand works well.

## **Photo Enforcement**

In states where automated photo speed enforcement is permissible, it can be used to concentrate on areas with high concentrations of pedestrians crossing. Vans allow the enforcement cameras to rotate to various sites, and warning signs are used to give motorists advance notice of the camera enforcement. Some communities combine photo speed enforcement with red-light enforcement, which can be used at traffic signals with high pedestrian exposure, such as school crossings or near parks or community centers.

## **Progressive Ticketing**

Progressive ticketing is a method for introducing ticketing through a three-staged process. Issuing tickets is the strongest strategy of an enforcement program and it is usually reserved for changing unsafe behaviors that other strategies failed to change or that pose a real threat to the safety of pedestrians.

1. Educating — Establish community awareness of the problem. The public needs to understand that drivers are speeding and the consequences of this speeding on pedestrian safety. Raising awareness about the problem will change some behaviors and create public support for the enforcement efforts to follow.
2. Warning — Announce what action will be taken and why. Give the public time to change behaviors before ticketing starts. Fliers, signs, newspaper stories and official warnings from officers can all serve as reminders.
3. Ticketing — Finally, after the warning time expires, hold a press conference announcing when and where the police operations will occur. If offenders continue their unsafe behaviors, officers issue tickets.

Issuing warnings allows police to contact up to 20 times as many non-compliant motorists than the writing of citations does. In addition, the high frequency of stops ensures not only that many people directly make contact with law enforcement, but also that many others witness these stops and are prompted to start to obey the rules.

Issuing tickets is needed, however, to deal with the motorists who continue the unsafe behaviors. Ticketing also gives the program credibility by showing that law enforcement is doing exactly what they said they would do if unsafe behavior did not change. Unfortunately, for some people receiving a ticket and experiencing the consequences are the only ways to get them to become safer drivers. Visit the [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#) for more information on progressive ticketing programs related to Safe Routes to School.

## Double Fines in School Zones and Other Special Interest Areas

Strict enforcement of speed laws in school zones and other special interest districts or areas is one law enforcement tool that can improve the safety for pedestrians as well as motorists. A zero tolerance policy for speeders in these zones and even an increase in fines for drivers who violate the posted speed limit are potential approaches. Visit the [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#) for more information on speed enforcement programs related to Safe Routes to School.

However, if the citations appear to be excessive or unreasonably high, the courts may fail to uphold the citations and the violator may be seen as the 'victim.' A more effective outcome will typically result from a high level of enforcement with reasonable fines.

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