

Several months ago, on a typically wonderful, bright, sunny Redlands day, as I crossed Cajon Street in the crosswalk that bridges the Police Annex and the Civic Center, I had a nearly career-ending (perhaps life-ending!) experience, one with which many Redlands pedestrians can relate.

My situational awareness (how's that for police lingo?) had dropped as I concentrated on department issues rather than the perils of being a pedestrian at that particular intersection. What I should have been concentrating on was the motorist northbound on Cajon in his 2,000-pound, 1990 Olds Cutlass who shared with me a very important trait – he was paying no more attention to his driving than I was to my walking.

I snapped back to reality when his car passed within two feet of me at 35 mph. At that moment budgets and personnel issues were the furthest things from my mind as I, at once, grappled with the cardiac implications of seeing my life pass before my eyes (literally) and struggled with my desire to chase after the offender with ticket book in hand!

For several years we have been conducting an on-going community survey of issues Redlanders feel are important for the police to concentrate on. "Survey says" that traffic issues -- such as the pedestrian right-of-way violation that nearly created a vacancy in the Police Chief's office, speeding and running stop signs -- are generally among the most disconcerting for our community.

In the world of "traffic" there is something known as the "Three E's." They are *engineering, education and enforcement*. These strategies comprise a comprehensive approach to traffic safety and form the foundation for how the RPD approaches this critical issue.

"Engineering" refers to the manner in which roadways are designed and constructed. A shifting viewpoint in traffic engineering is the notion of traffic "calming." This means that the manner in which a street is built can affect the perception motorists have about how safe it is for them to drive at certain speeds. Cypress Avenue, for instance, is a wide, four-lane street that gives less attentive motorists the subliminal perception that they are driving on something akin to a highway where the legal speed limit is 55+ mph. Accordingly, they frequently drive in excess of the posted 25-40 mph speed limit.

"Education" implies that there is something the City can do to change the behavior of motorists other than simply writing tickets. It is predicated on the belief that the overwhelming number of motorists are good, law-abiding people who are just not paying attention to their driving. When alerted to their excessive speed by one of our radar speed trailers, for example, they will slow down.

When engineering and educational efforts are ineffective, "enforcement" of traffic laws comes into play. This is the most severe of governmental responses because it is a direct sanction that is almost always inconvenient and expensive for generally law-abiding people. Sometimes the number and severity of violations are so critical that the department must take extreme enforcement measures. Our pedestrian right-of-way enforcement actions are an example of this. In these operations, RPD employees use plainly marked crosswalks to cross streets where these violations are prevalent. They, and the vehicles passing through the area, are closely monitored by police officers. When a right-of-way violation occurs the violator is stopped and cited.

All RPD officers can, and do, enforce vehicle code violations. However, the lion's share of this responsibility falls on the shoulders of the department's Traffic Safety Unit. Headquartered in the department's downtown substation, this unit's current staffing is a corporal, four motorcycle officers, a community service officer and two parking control officers. In January, the department is slated to add a fifth "motor officer." This is critical to our approach, as Redlands is divided into five geographic policing areas. Currently one officer must cover two areas, which impairs his effectiveness. Our community based policing philosophy dictates that in order for officers to solve compelling neighborhood traffic problems, they must work the same geographic areas and be afforded the opportunity to spend the time necessary to actually fix the problem. I'm sure this two-area officer actually feels more like a firefighter than a police officer as he goes from one traffic problem to another, simply "putting out traffic fires" rather than having the opportunity to solve the problems.

Under the direction of Redlands City Councilmember Jon Harrison, the City has formed the *Traffic Safety Team* as part of its *Safe Streets Initiative*. This interdisciplinary team, comprised of members of the Police and Public Works departments, takes a holistic approach to *solving* neighborhood traffic problems. It is modeled after Redlands' highly successful *Neighborhood Improvement Team* that focused on issues of neighborhood blight and disorder. The *Traffic Safety Team* seeks public input and participation. If you are interested in participating please contact my office.

Clearly, I have only scratched the surface of traffic issues in Redlands. My next several columns will be dedicated to traffic safety and I'll spend more time explaining our philosophy and the challenges in creating "safe streets."

Remember, when motoring around Redlands, keep your attention focused on your driving, watch your speed and be attentive to pedestrians. If you are using a crosswalk, NEVER assume drivers see you until they stop for you.

If you have any questions or comments you can contact me at 909-798-7661 or via e-mail at [chief@redlandspolice.org](mailto:chief@redlandspolice.org).