

In my last column I wrote about the “Three E’s” of traffic safety. 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 constructed or modified can affect the perception motorists have about how safe it is for them to drive at certain speeds. Cypress Ave., 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.

To “narrow” a driver’s perception of certain wide roadways the City’s Public Works Department has re-striped Olive Ave. and Fern Ave. This has caused traffic to slow appreciably (of course residents along those streets might disagree). Painting left-hand turn lanes in the middle of the streets help drivers turn left without being rear-ended, but also gives motorists the subliminal impression that because the road is narrower, they must drive slower. A similar action in front of Cope Middle School was recently undertaken as part of the City’s *Safe Streets Initiative*, which is being overseen by councilmember Jon Harrison. In front of the school the streets have been re-striped to narrow the lanes and accommodate portable, highly visible street signs warning of the crosswalk located just ahead. We’ve also finally added a crossing guard to this student crossing that has raised safety concerns for quite awhile.

“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 instance, they will slow down.

Recently, you may have driven through a school zone in the morning and were stopped by a friendly police officer handling out traffic safety awareness flyers. This was our attempt to remind you (and educate drivers new to the area) that school is back in session and we all need to be extra careful during the school hours when driving by our schools. In the future we hope to acquire funding to place solar powered, highly visible school zone signs near the schools. These high-tech signs also have a radar speed device built into them that display your vehicle speed to help you maintain the appropriate speed near schools.

When engineering and educational efforts prove ineffective, the department’s police officers engage in “enforcement” activities to modify driving behavior. We have two types of officers that specialize in traffic issues: those riding motorcycles and those patrolling in cars. “Motor officers” have primary responsibility for enforcing traffic laws while those in cars are primarily accident investigators (although each group does both at times). The motor officers (or “motors” in police-eze) are geographically assigned and work the same neighborhoods day-after-day. This allows them to become very familiar with the traffic issues in the city’s five policing areas and the drivers who frequent them. At this time we have four officers for the five areas which leads to a level of frustration among the officers that are stretched too thin and the

residents in some areas that don't see enough enforcement activity. This situation will be alleviated in January when we add a fifth motor officer under a state Office of Traffic Safety grant.

A principle advantage of having the officers assigned to the same areas is that, in addition to the continuity this provides relative to traffic problem solving, the officers really get to know the driving behavior of the motorists in the area. This makes it easier for them to track whether motorists are heeding the officers' warnings or are repeatedly violating traffic laws. In those instances a ticket may be more appropriate than a warning. Remember, our goal is to change the inappropriate driving behavior of Redlands motorists, thereby making the streets safer, not to unnecessarily cost them lots of money in the form of court fines or increased insurance premiums.

Unfortunately, there is much more to traffic safety than I've been able to write in this column. Rest assured that the officers and civilian employees of the RPD are working diligently to ensure our streets are as safe as possible and are constantly searching for innovative ways to do so.

If you have any comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at 909-798-7661 or via e-mail at chief@redlandspolice.org or the department's Traffic Safety Unit at 909-798-7610.