

# Safety questioned after parade's premature start

By Susan Buck  
staff writer

The premature start of North Farmington High's Homecoming parade Oct. 28, before a police escort arrived, raised safety questions and concerns.

Set to begin by city permit at 11:45 a.m. that Saturday, the go-ahead for the parade to begin was apparently given mistakenly at 11:30 a.m.

By the time police arrived, between 11:35 a.m. and 11:40 a.m., the parade was in progress, creating what police say was a risky situation.

"The parade accidentally started at the wrong time," said Charles Aury, North Farmington administrative assistant. "The kids were getting amny. I ended up at the back of the parade. I was only there for the judging of the parade. The police were disturbed that the parade had started."

Sgt. Ray Cranston, Farmington Hills Police Department traffic section supervisor, said when he arrived at work the following Monday, he received word almost simultaneous-

ly from traffic officer Don Fradette, who routinely works these details with three reserve officers, and from Don Cowan, North Farmington principal, who called to apologize for the mixup.

"Generally, what has transpired historically is that the schools wait for a police escort before they begin the parade," Cranston said. "When the officers arrived just prior to 11:45 a.m., the parade was already moving. Some person of authority obviously initiated it. It was my understanding the individual who started the parade wasn't aware."

"What they (police) found was that vehicles were still going northbound on Farmington Road and attempting to get onto the shoulder. What we generally do is control traffic at 13 Mile and Farmington Road and prohibit northbound traffic," Cranston said.

The route hasn't varied since 1987. It begins at Forest Elementary on Old Timber, goes east, then south on Farmington Road and finally east onto the game field.

"IT'S PURE speculation how far this had gotten on Farmington Road," Cranston said. "I don't know the length of the procession. I do

know they (the police) found them on Farmington Road north of 13 Mile. Traffic is a fluid thing that changes every couple of minutes.

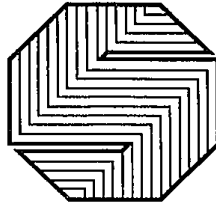
"The question is, 'How far away was the first driver?' We're in a difficult position once things are under way. I understand that internal action in the school system resolved the problem."

Cranston said a lower traffic volume that day probably helped cut the risk somewhat.

Cowan admitted mistakes were made. "One group thought it was 11:30 a.m.; one group thought it was 11:45 a.m. Those things should start with a police escort. All of our forms here said 11:30 a.m. Fortunately, it (the parade) was going through a subdivision and did not create a real problem. The police were very tight on their schedule. It's almost a dead issue right now."

Cowan said he spoke to all parties concerned. No formal disciplinary action was taken, he said.

"I have spoken to administrators and they have taken care of it," said Fradette, school board president. "They have apologized to the police."



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## Hills firefighter contract OK'd

Farmington Hills' full-time firefighters who belong to the International Association of Fire Fighters will receive a 4 percent annual pay raises under terms of a new contract.

The three-year pact is effective July 1, 1989 to June 30, 1992. The pay raises take effect July 1 of each year.

The contract covers the city's 12 full-time firefighters who belong to the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 2659.

It includes improvements in sick leave, vacation time and life insurance. A cap for tuition reimbursement was removed but prior written approval from the fire chief is still

required for reimbursement.

The contract provides a pension "buy back" provision for firefighters who formerly served in the military service. It also includes drug testing guidelines.

The union ratified the agreement Nov. 15. The council approved it Nov. 20.

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