

Farmington Hills police target overweight trucks

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police have a warning for trucks toting an overload: Shape up or ship out a check in care of the court for a hefty fine.

Penalties in the department's new Motor Carrier Weighmaster Enforcement Program can reach several thousands of dollars, a police official said. One trucker has already been fined \$1,040 after being stopped on Eight Mile and Grand River.

Specially trained officers are checking trucks' axle weights as well as for safety and equipment violations since the program started in September.

"We receive complaints on these trucks and we've found that they've caused considerable damage to the roads," Hills police Chief Bill Dwyer said.

Farmington Hills followed the state's motor carrier laws and city council incorporated those as part of a local ordinance. As a result, money collected from

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—Farmington Hills police chief

fines will go to through the 47th District Court as opposed to the state.

Fine money will be used to pay for the enforcement program, which includes training for two officers, purchase of portable scales and equipment for a \$25,000 Ford Expedition. Once the program is paid for, money collected will go into a special fund to repair city roads, Dwyer said.

Enforcement is not limited to weight violations.

So far, police have also ticket-

ed trucks for flat tires, not having an emergency breakaway systems and drivers for not possessing a proper license, said Lt. Dennis Green, Hills police traffic division.

Offenders are not limited to 18-wheel rigs but include gravel haulers or cement trucks, which travel the city's mile roads and major thoroughfares as opposed to only nearby freeways.

Those ticketed are just as likely to belong to large companies as those driven and owned by independent truckers, Green said. In those cases, the company is fined and not the driver.

"The generalization is that independent trucks are usually the best ones for complying with the laws," Green said.

Weights are based on the truck's wheel configuration, number of axles and vehicle type. Officers weigh each axle and fines are tabulated for each of those over the limit.

"If one axle is overweight, then there's usually several that are overweight," Green said.



Weighty issue: Farmington Hills police officers Larry Luttrell, left, and Tom Shivaik underwent special training to become part of the department's Weighmaster Program, which is designed to keep overweight trucks off city roads. Overweight trucks are cited for being as the cause for damage to area roads.

Seniors to benefit from grant program

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Pending final approval by the Farmington City Council, senior citizens again stand to benefit from the Community Development Block Grant program.

At Monday's city council meeting, officials discussed \$32,816 in 1998-99 block grant dollars going for senior citizen programs and services, as well as to continue equipping the Senior Adult Center, located inside the William Costick Activities Center on 11 Mile Road in Farmington Hills.

But as part of the application process, a public hearing is required to be held. The council set 8 p.m. Monday, Nov. 3 for the hearing. Input from senior adults in the city is invited, said Farmington Assistant City Manager Bill Richards.

The council must then approve the 98-99 program and make its application to the county — which administers the block grant program for the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development — by Dec. 2, Richards said.

In the last census, done in 1990, about 24 percent of the 10,132 population was in the 65-and-older category. But, said Richards, "I don't think you have to be 65 to participate at the senior center."

The city of Farmington Hills apparently does not designate block grant money for the center, said Senior Adult Supervisor Loretta Conway. Residents there, however, pay a millage that helps fund programming. She was pleased to hear Farmington again is supporting the center.

"They are a wonderful city and the support they give us both financially and morally is greatly appreciated," Conway said.

Money from the block grant program helps provide meals, transportation and a plethora of programs and activities. The Farmington block grant money, however, must primarily be for low or moderate income residents.

The center has a swimming pool, daytime care for seniors and "The Senior Messenger," a monthly newsletter.

A calendar in the newsletter includes a day-by-day breakdown of the many activities available through the program. For example, today's offerings include: Tai Chi, 9 a.m.; crafts, 10 a.m.; computer forum, 10 a.m.; pool exercise, 10 a.m.; open swimming, 11 a.m.; ping pong, 1 p.m.; and Bingo, 1:15 p.m.

The 1998-99 Community Block Grant Program is for the period from May 1, 1998 through April 30, 1999.

Hills woman clips pigeon drop scam

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A 72-year-old Farmington Hills woman did the right thing when approached by a stranger offering to split half of \$100,000 that was just found, police said.

The older woman became suspicious and immediately called police.

That heads-up move likely foiled what is commonly known as "the pigeon drop."

The scam works like this: A person comes up and says he's found a large sum of cash and asked the intended victim to put up half of the money as a good faith effort.

After the victim adds his half, the "found" money usually turns out to be bogus. By then the swindler is gone along with the victim's good faith cash.

Pigeon drop perpetrators typically prey on seniors, police said. "Sometimes people won't call police because they're too embarrassed," said Bonnie Unruh, Hills police crime prevention officer.

In this case, the woman was walking to her vehicle outside when approached by another female in the Kroger parking lot on 14 Mile around 2:10 p.m. Oct. 10, West Bloomfield police said.

The female, described as a heavyset black woman in a nurse's uniform, asked the older woman if she had dropped something.

"It's almost as if she knew exactly what to do."

Lt. Carl Fuhs
—West Bloomfield police

That something turned out to be a black bag containing \$100,000 along with some jewels. The female said she'd call her boss to ask what to do with the money and tried to get the woman to accompany her to a bank.

The older woman refused, saying they should call the police instead.

When the female left, the older woman notified police. Hills police stopped a 1997 Toyota on Orchard Lake, near the I-696 exit.

The driver was wearing a nurse's uniform under a black coat. Police found a bag with two \$100 bills wrapped around approximately 400 \$1 bills and some gem-like stones inside.

Hills police arrested a Detroit woman, 36, for not having a valid driver's license. Police are still investigating whether a fraud was committed. But they're complimenting the intended victim.

"It's almost as if she knew exactly what to do," said Lt. Carl Fuhs, West Bloomfield police. "She didn't hesitate. She wasn't going anywhere but go to the police. That foiled the crime."

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