

Police buckle down to enforce seat belt law

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STAFF WRITER

Out of earshot, out of mind, won't work in this case. You still have to wear your safety belt and police are still enforcing the law.

In fact, you can get ready for an enforcement blitz by Farmington Hills police, who will target drivers without safety belts. That's particularly true during summer holiday weekends, beginning with Memorial Day weekend.

"We need to go back after a major enforcement effort and re-enforce it," said Sgt. Ray Cranston of the Farmington Hills Police Department's traffic section. "Officers will be concentrating on the seat belt laws. Holiday weekends are usually a high accident time."

In addition to Memorial Day weekend, the Independence Day (June 26-July 6) and Labor Day (Sept.

3-12) holidays will be targeted. Blitz II-We're Back — the latest enforcement effort including local, county and state police agencies — comes not too long after the Farmington Hills Police Department's 1991 Buckle Up program.

The Buckle Up program included a media blitz to encourage motorists to wear safety belts and increased police enforcement. Surveys were conducted to determine if motorists complied with tougher safety belt laws.

An October 1991 survey of 2,052 vehicles or drivers, and 148 passengers, showed compliance was an average 71.8 percent, 75.4 percent for women and 68.7 percent for men.

That's compared to an August 1991 study that showed a 69.7 percent average compliance. At that time, women drivers and passengers wore their safety

belts 72.4 percent and men 67.5 percent.

A recent statewide survey on safety belt use showed that 50.1 percent of front seat occupants buckled up. The goal of the national safety belt campaign is 70 percent. Before Michigan passed a safety belt law, 18.3 percent of front seat occupants age 16 and older were reported to be buckled up in 1984.

"You need to go back after a major enforcement effort and re-enforce it," Cranston said.

Police have no doubt that safety belts are saving lives and reducing serious injuries. In 1991, 846 people were injured in car accidents, compared to 1,032 in 1988. Thanks to safety belts, injuries have become less serious, Cranston said.

"All of that suggests belts. Safety belts are having a significant impact."

The law requires all drivers and front seat passengers to buckle up. Police can ticket violators only as a

secondary stop, which means a motorist has to be stopped for another violation.

Police can stop a driver as a primary stop — in which he or she doesn't need to be pulled over for another violation first — if a child under age 1 isn't in a child car seat in the front or back seat.

As a primary stop, you can be ticketed if a child ages 1-4 is not in a child car seat in the front seat or in a car seat or safety belt in the back.

Police also can stop you as a secondary stop if children ages 4-16 aren't wearing safety belts while in the front seat or back seat. There are no legal requirements for passengers age 16 and older to wear a safety belt in the back seat.

Violation of the safety belt law carries a \$35 fine. Violations of the child restraint law, a \$50 fine. No points are assessed against a motorist's driving record.

POLICE/FIRE CALLS

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week.

BUSINESS BREAK-INS

Four businesses in a strip mall on 12 Mile Road were broken into, sometime Sunday or Monday, according to Farmington Hills police reports.

Dominio's Pizza, 30002 12 Mile, received an estimated \$200 when

the rubber broke a glass door. File cabinets and the office were ransacked. But it doesn't appear anything was stolen.

Three-Way Cleaners, 30008 12 Mile, also received an estimated \$200 damage when a glass door was broken. The office desk was ransacked and \$20 cash was reported missing.

Graf's Pastry Kitchen, 30010 12 Mile, reported \$31 in quarters and dimes stolen. Damage to a glass

door was estimated at \$200. Mita's Chinese Food, 30012 12 Mile, also received an estimated \$200 damage to a glass door. Nothing appeared to have been taken.

FELONIOUS ASSAULT

An 18-year-old Southfield man was hit with a paint splat gun by an unidentified driver on 33 Mile Road, May 15, according to Farmington Hills police reports.

The man told police he was

stopped at a traffic light when a man in a Jeep Cherokee next to him "bumped him in the left forearm with a splat gun. The man then yelled an obscenity at the Southfield resident. A second shot was fired as the man drove away from the Cherokee. The man was not seriously injured.

BREAK-INS REPORTED

Two apparently unrelated residential break-ins occurred in Farm-

ington May 18, according to the Farmington Department of Public Safety. Nothing was reported stolen in either case.

One, on Maple Street, caused \$189 in damage to the home's door and it appeared the home had been searched, a report said. The other was reported on Valley View, where a jewelry box was taken from a closet shelf and put on the floor.

THEFTS REPORTED

A snowblower, trimmer/edger and

chain saw valued at \$700 was reported stolen from a house on Stockton, May 15.

A TV and VCR valued at \$400 were reported stolen from a 1990 Chevrolet on Woodhill, May 18-19.

Wheel covers valued at \$150 were reported stolen from a 1987 Ford at the Windemere Apartments on 17th, Unlisted, north of Grand River, May 17.

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