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reported being nearly hit by someone driving out. The man looped back into the lot, parked next to her and berated her driving, using foul language.

Then he spat in her face. Those are just two of more

than half a dozen incidents in December and January that Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer would classify as "road rage." The problem is relatively new, at least in the public eye, and it's growing.

"It appears there's more of these incidents than reported earlier, and we see a higher amount during construction season," Dwyer said. "People become irritated, just because of anger, stress or impatience."

Take the young man who assaulted another driver, after a verbal dispute between the boy's father and another driver escalated. That happened on Christmas Eve. Or the tailgater who struck the vehicle in front of him on New Year's Eve, causing minor damage.

A common thread seems to be the lack of simple courtesy, coupled with an escalating level of anger - from verbal insults, to the display of the infamous "middle finger," to physical attacks.

Dwyer said one sure way to prevent road rage is to step away

as soon as a situation appears to be getting out of control.

"Do not give someone the opportunity to let it escalate," he said. "Use your cell phone to call the local police department or drive to an open business."

Drivers also need to use simple common sense. Like signaling before a lane change and keeping both hands on the wheel, which can go a long way to prevent problems before they even start.

"If someone cuts you off, keep in that courteous frame of mind," Dwyer said. "While merging, leave plenty of space and use your turn signals."

Experts also recommend stress management for people who feel themselves losing control on the road, he added. "That will not only reduce the risk for other

drivers, it will reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke."

Eyes contact only personalizes a dispute, so Dwyer recommends trying to ignore combative or aggressive behavior in other drivers. He also would like to see a return to what too many drivers forget: simple courtesy.

"I think it's becoming lost more and more," he said. "I think there's more stress on the roads, and people are getting involved more and more in these types of incidents. That's just part of our society."

While the Hills Police Department doesn't have the resources to mount any special patrols to combat this special problem, Michigan State Police has begun to run occasional "decoy" operations, particularly in construction areas where tempers are

most likely to flare due to long delays and traffic congestion.

A uniformed officer in an unmarked car will cruise an area and call ahead to a marked patrol car when he or she observes aggressive driving behavior, such as tailgating or frequent, sudden lane changes.

Since its inception in August of 1998, the program has resulted in hundreds of traffic stops and, perhaps, a greater awareness of the consequences of aggressive driving habits.

The state patrol, however, has its limits, too.

"I would say it's been successful," said Metro North Post Lt. Greg Sykes. "The problem we have is that we don't have the resources to allocate personnel to do this every day."

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Digital from page A1

channels.

Prices for digital TV have not yet been determined, he said, promising customers would see something for everyone in the family.

Offerings include a variety of new digital channels, a number of pay-per-view selections, digital music and an interactive program guide, McCann said. Viewers won't have to call to order pay-per-view programming with digital TV.

A converter box will be necessary to add the digital TV service, he said.

"The appeal of satellite TV is the ability to view more channels and digital TV will allow us to be more competitive in the market place," McCann said.

The advanced technology may also make for a silver lining in a cloud hanging over franchise negotiations, Hartscock said. When the communities of Farmington and Farmington Hills

TIME WARNER

first began meeting with Time Warner, things like digital TV and high-speed Internet access through cable lines weren't on the plate.

"With the advent of new technology, we just keep adding onto our list as far as items to be added to our franchise agreement," Hartscock said. "They want to provide that service to

their clients. As far as upgrades, we're on the same side of that issue."

Whether common ground will move things along remains unclear. As the parties continue to negotiate, an administrative panel has established a timeline to hear arguments from both sides next month, if negotiations fail.

Staff writer Bill Casper also contributed to this article.

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OBITUARIES

BENJAMIN J. SCEZAPANIAK
Services for Benjamin J. Sczepaniak, 52, of Farmington Hills were held at St. Alexander's Church in Farmington Hills with the Rev. James Wright officiating.

Mr. Sczepaniak was born Aug. 24, 1917 in Webster, Mass., and died Jan. 27. He worked as a shoe foreman for Billig Shoe Company.

He is survived by sons, Bruce (Sue) and Brian; grandsons, Jason (Julie) and Damien; four sisters; and one brother. He is preceded in death by his wife, Rita.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Salvation Army.

MARIE T. STAY

Services for Marie T. Stay, 88, of Farmington Hills were held Feb. 5 at St. Gerald Catholic Church in Farmington with the Rev. Gerald McEnhill officiating. Burial took place at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Detroit.

Mrs. Stay was born Jan. 22, 1912 in Groton, Conn., and died Feb. 1 at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak.

She is survived by daughters, Arlene (Corbin) Elliott and Joyce Unti; son, Ellsworth, M.D. (Martha); brother, James Shovlin; eight grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Arrangements made by Heeney-Sundquist Funeral Home in Farmington.

LUCY TURRIN
Services for Lucy Turrin, 81 of Milford were held Jan. 18 at Manns-Ferguson Funeral Home with the Rev. Ray Bucon officiating.

Mrs. Turrin was born Jan. 26, 1918 in Italy and died Jan. 15. She is survived by children, Alvin (Bertha), Delma (Frank) Vetter; and Marie (Fred) Griffith; stepchildren, Angela (Manfred) Knip, Rose (Stanley) Simon, Cara (Douglas) Schiebner and Belinda (Roger) Olle; sisters, Irma (Aldo) Rea and Silvio (Loretta) Alfonso. 12 grandchildren; and 24 great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by sisters, Anna (Henry) Cairo and Christina (Wilhelm) Fredrikaan.

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