

HILLSBOROUGH: Police to watch pushy drivers

By Audrey Levine, Staff Writer

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A new police traffic enforcement program seeks to reduce accidents on six roads considered secondary routes for drivers looking to avoid the highway traffic on Route 206.

The Hillsborough Township Police Department has received a grant from the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety to participate in "Obey the Signs or Pay the Fines" from March through September.

The program will serve to counter aggressive driving through increased patrols on the roads in question, according to Hillsborough Township police Sgt. Ken Pryor, head of the Traffic Safety Bureau.

"We are looking to reduce accidents," he said. "There will be added enforcement, and, from now until September, we will have an extra 100 blocks (three-hour shifts) of patrols."

According to Sgt. Pryor, the department received \$17,810 through the grant to pay for the extra patrols in addition to a stalker radar unit that measures speed.

The roads with added patrols will be Amwell Road between Route 206 and River Road; Auten Road; Dukes Parkway West; New Centre Road between Roycefield Road and Auten Road; River Road between the Studdiford and Basilone bridges; and Triangle Road.

"Our 2007 and 2008 crash data noted elevated frequencies of accidents on those roads," Sgt. Pryor said. "All the roads are secondary instead of using Route 206 to avoid backups and high volumes of traffic. These roads are heavily traveled in rush hour to avoid the highway."

Sgt. Pryor said officers will rotate among 100 different three-hour shifts during the program, all of which will be done above and beyond their regular patrol duties. He said the grant will be used to cover part of those costs while the department will shoulder the remainder.

"The money pays partially for the extra patrols," he said. "We will cover the rest."

In addition, unlike other grant programs to increase patrols, Sgt. Pryor said he is not planning for any checkpoints, just having individual officers assigned to certain roads.

"They will just be looking for motor vehicle violations," he said. "They are dedicated to that job during their shifts."

These violations, Sgt. Pryor said, include speeding, tailgating, improper passing and others.

At this point, Sgt. Pryor said, the department is in the initial phases of the grant, informing drivers patrols have been increased through advertising and speed trailers being put on the roads to remind motorists about the allowed speed.

"The patrols will start in April and last for a couple months," he said. "We wanted to do this grant over a long period to get the accident data (afterward) and see if the patrols are having an effect."

For the most part, Sgt. Pryor said, programs like this and the biannual "Over the Limit Under Arrest" do work as drivers see additional officers on patrol during certain times of the year.

"If people are seeing increased enforcement, they will change their behaviors," he said. "The programs do have an effect. Sooner or later, drivers forget, and then we do the program again."

In a press release about the program, a list of safe driving tips included avoiding aggressive drivers, maintaining a safe following distance, not exceeding the speed limit, obeying traffic signals and always buckling seatbelts.

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