

South Tahoe chief explains traffic citations

By Brian T. Uhler

A recent concern expressed by some community members included the idea there has been an increase in the number of traffic citations issued by South Lake Tahoe police officers. Others may very well contend that our department should do more in the way of controlling unsafe drivers in our community.

This chart outlines annual citation and written warning data.



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A few other important points include:

- When averaged among 30 field officers and sergeants, less than three citations per month were issued per officer/sergeant in 2010
- Speeding is the most frequent violation
- A mixture of productivity data such as the number of reports written, number of arrests, citations issued, and completed assignments are compiled to measure the work of our officers
- There are no special recognitions, incentive pays, or prizes of any type for any officer who write high numbers of traffic citations

- Enforcing traffic law oftentimes leads to significant arrests (example: Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVey was initially stopped for a traffic violation a short time after the bombing)
- Our officers are permitted to exercise discretion in deciding to write citations or written warnings
- Scientific studies support the contention that effective traffic enforcement lowers accident rates
- A recent news article indicated that an officer wrote 310 citations in 11 months. This included warnings and citations—more than half of which were warnings. On some occasions, this officer was assigned specifically to traffic enforcement duties.

Our officers are encouraged by supervisors and managers to use their work time productively. We realize that it is a challenge to issue a citation to a person and have them pleased with police services but we endeavor to be professional and courteous when citing people for violating traffic law.

Brian T. Uhler, is the South Lake Tahoe police chief.