

Opinion: Police enforcement reduces accidents in South Lake Tahoe

By Shannon Laney

Over the summer, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department conducted a directed traffic enforcement program targeting violators in residential neighborhoods. This was a three-pronged program that included the local media, officers targeting specific problem areas, and an avenue for our public to have input into our efforts through email and phone calls.

Since June 14, we have written a total of 181 citations and 266 written warnings citywide. The majority of these traffic stops were within the targeted neighborhoods. In the same time frame we responded to three injury traffic collisions and 11 non-injury traffic collisions.

From June 14, 2010, to Sept. 4, 2010, we wrote 209 citations and 243 warnings citywide. During that time, we responded to 21 injury traffic collisions and 24 non-injury traffic collisions.

That is an 85 percent reduction in injury collisions and a 54 percent reduction in non-injury collisions. There are several factors that can be attributed to the reduction, including a late start to summer weather, tourism and road construction. However, it also shows that directing our efforts toward problem areas along with the help of our local media bringing attention to our efforts and public input has the greatest impact overall.

For the next couple of weeks, we will be shifting gears. One major problem that has been identified is bicyclists. A large part of our injury collisions include bicycle versus car

collisions.

Here's the law:

California Vehicle Code section 21200(a), "Every person riding a bicycle upon a highway has all the rights and is subject to all the provisions applicable to the driver of a vehicle". In other words, bicyclists must follow the same traffic laws as does the driver of a motor vehicle including stop signs, stop lights, riding on the roadway in the same direction as traffic flows and not ride while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Anyone riding a bicycle under the age of 18 must also wear a helmet. The South Lake Tahoe Police Department does have free bicycle helmets for our youth. Just stop by the station and request a youth bicycle helmet.

A bicycle riding at night must also have a white headlight and a red reflector to the rear, California Vehicle Code section 21201(d)(1),(2).

Shannon Laney is the traffic supervisor and sergeant for the South Lake Tahoe Police Department and can be reached at (530) 542.6104 slaney@cityofslt.us.