

# Ohio State Highway Patrol

## Monthly Commander's Column



### Effective traffic enforcement impacts criminals and makes communities safer

This month I am writing about the value of using effective traffic enforcement in order to significantly impact the criminal element on our public roadways and in our communities.

Public opinion surveys on highway safety conducted at Highway Patrol driver examination stations continue to indicate area residents care most about law enforcement arresting drunk drivers, stopping aggressive drivers, and protecting them from highway crime. State troopers are primarily focused to provide a level of core services related to these areas.

Through effective traffic enforcement, we are achieving great inroads toward safer Ohio communities and neighborhoods. Our troopers are trained to take extra time when stopped with motorists, and to do what we call, "Look beyond the traffic stop."

By taking extra time during each traffic stop, and paying close attention to possible indicators of criminal activity, what on the surface seems to be a rather routine traffic stop can turn into something much more significant.

Through effective traffic enforcement, we catch vehicle thieves and return stolen vehicles back to their owners. Last year, state troopers recovered nearly 800 stolen vehicles, and arrested suspects in connection with a majority of those crimes.

Through effective traffic enforcement we are able to interdict large shipments of illegal narcotics that are destined for cities across the country and Ohio – maybe even including your neighborhood.

Last year, troopers made 5,226 drug arrests, some of which led local drug task forces to apprehensions in larger drug and other criminal cases - all right out of traffic stops.

When we stop a shipment of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, or some other illegal narcotic before it enters a city we are able to stop the spread of these drugs which can permeate communities like a disease.

Through effective traffic enforcement, we are able to remove weapons from dangerous criminals, and arrest felons before they are able to damage property in Ohio communities or inflict serious injury or worse on Ohio families.

Of course it's not enough anymore for the public to rely solely on law enforcement to keep communities safe.

Every citizen has a responsibility to be part of the solution against crime.

Hopefully you are active in your community and encourage your neighbors if they see something that looks out of place, or someone acting suspicious in their neighborhood – to contact the local law enforcement agency.

Who knows better than a local resident when something or someone looks out of place in the neighborhood, place of business, or other local areas in which they are familiar?

Those who want to do harm to others are counting on the fact that individuals and neighborhoods won't step up and take responsibility to ensure the safety of our communities and families. That's what we're up against. We must all be willing to do more, and to respond positively to this challenge. The stakes are very high.

While Ohio roads were getting safer – Ohio highways were safer in 2008 than any previous year on record – state troopers were also directly impacting the safety of Ohio communities and neighborhoods.

In addition to the more than 5,000 drug arrests I mentioned earlier, last year state troopers made 1,693 felony arrests, 972 felony warrant apprehensions and 251 arrests for illegal weapons.

Those results are indicative of the successes that can be achieved by having officers take the time to look beyond the initial traffic stop.

It all starts by our commitment to the fundamentals of quality law enforcement that can turn a traffic stop into the end of the road for a dangerous criminal. On behalf of your local Highway Patrol troopers, we are honored to serve you and your family to make every day as safe as possible.