

“IMPACT OF COVID ON TRAFFIC SAFETY EFFORTS”

Bob Thompson

WTSC

Statewide Law Enforcement Liaison

Washington Traffic Safety Commission Meeting

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BEFORE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

- Law Enforcement Participated in High Visibility Enforcement (HVE) Events
- No contact restrictions
- Officers conducted business as usual
- “In Person” report contacts
- Usual briefings/breaks
- Officers participating in regular, RCW mandated training
- Officers participating in optional training
- Officers participating in community meetings

COVID GUIDELINES

MARCH 2020

- Governor instituted first of many executive orders regarding restrictions
- Schools across the state closed
- Restaurants and bars closed in the state
- Many businesses forced to close
- All sports curtailed/cancelled
- The beginning of stay home, stay safe

LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE

- Generally, starting in March, Sheriff's/Chief's gave guidance to reduce contact
 - Done to limit exposure risk
 - To keep work force as healthy as practical/Prevent quarantines
 - PPE's mandatory on contacts
 - Briefings can be conducted electronically to limit exposure
 - Split shift works
 - No response to routine report calls – taken via phone
 - Respond to priority calls only
 - Reports written in secure area
 - No roadside contacts between officers
 - Training suspended

TRAFFIC IMPACTS DUE TO COVID

- Rise in number of speeders on roadways
- Rise in number of serious injury/fatal crashes on roads
- Concern raised as vehicle miles traveled as decreased
- Decrease in enforcement across the state

ATMOSPHERE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Social Media amplifying the national narrative
- Perceived Systemic Racism by law enforcement
- Protests/Riots based on Law Enforcement Use of Force Incidents
- Perceived general biased against Law Enforcement
- Qualified Immunity Issues
- Charges against officers
- Citizen Advisory Groups
- Citizen distrust/Defund the Police

GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ADMINISTRATION STATEMENTS

(09-23-2020)

- GHSA vehemently condemns racism in all its forms
- Recommends agency staffing conforms with demographics
- Agencies be proactive to eliminate any bias in enforcement
- Recommend more input from minorities in planning highway safety plans and goals
- While GHSA urges reform, we continue to support the proven role of traffic enforcement and the wider criminal justice system to prevent crashes, deaths and injuries; stop dangerous driving; and hold drivers accountable for poor, often deadly, choices.

LAW ENFORCEMENT INQUIRIES THROUGH THE LEL NETWORK

- Since March, 3 separate inquiries
- April, July and September
- Several questions asked
 - Chief/Sheriff's instructions on pro active enforcement
 - General temperature of the front line officers
 - Impaired Driving enforcement
 - General regular traffic enforcement duties
 - Regular reports/contacts
 - General attitude to police interactions that created atmosphere
 - Prognosis for return to normal pre-COVID level duty

LAW ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD

- Gallop poll (8-2020) “Confidence in Law Enforcement at record low.”
- Regain public trust-dispel misperceptions
- Recruitment/retention of good officers
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Mandatory Body Cams – public pressure
- Training
- Community Partnerships
- Pro Active mind set

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- Law Enforcement Leadership is the key to return to normal
- Support of officers
- Police officer motivation
- More departments, including the WSP, are back to normal contacts
- Urban departments slower to return to normal
- As COVID treatment/vaccine progresses, restrictions lift, more agencies relaxing officer contacts
- Officers becoming more comfortable with pro-active contacts
- Agencies again participating in HVE events

QUESTIONS?

Thank you!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Bob Thompson

Washington State Law Enforcement Liaison

Washington Traffic Safety Commission

bdthompson@wtsc.wa.gov

253-209-5123