

population is increasing and there is a corresponding increase in the number of licensed drivers. Generally, more drivers on the road means increased driver exposure leading to more crashes and more ensuing police investigations. These demands can impact the resources available for other aspects of traffic enforcement as well as for dealing with increasingly complex criminal issues.

Sheriff's Departments Show Increases

Within the context of this study, the only type of law enforcement agency that showed an increase in traffic law enforcement activity were sheriff's departments. Three of the four sheriff's agencies showed increasing trends of traffic citations. Most agencies of all categories reported that citizen input stimulated their emphasis on traffic enforcement, rather than other reasons (such as the public good, or reducing the toll in injury and deaths due to traffic crashes). It is interesting to note that the only agencies actually increasing traffic enforcement activity were those where the top administrator was an elected official.

Suggestions

While motorists are responsible for driving safely, law enforcement agencies are the only means of ensuring that traffic laws are obeyed. Their dedication to promoting safe driving and apprehending dangerous drivers result in safer roads. Falling enforcement levels will ultimately threaten public safety.

Traffic law enforcement efforts must be increased, but not at the expense of other worthwhile system components. Based on the conclusions of this project, the following suggestions may prove useful for increasing traffic law enforcement:

- Garner command emphasis
- Combat personnel shortages by hiring non-sworn staff members
- Value and promote officers working in traffic law enforcement
- Gather public support
- Encourage routine data collection efforts and use the data to report on progress
- Promote grant funding for traffic-related labor, programs and equipment
- Promote accountability.

The report includes detailed information, graphs, and charts for different types of agencies and their communities. It describes traffic law enforcement activities by type, labor hours in some jurisdictions, population changes, and the ratio of officer to licensed drivers. It also documents the strategies agencies used to allocate scarce resources in the face of rising demands.

Limitations of Study

This study attempted to identify trends in activity relating to traffic law enforcement by the participating law enforcement agencies and was not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities in the jurisdictions studied. Due to the relatively small number of LEAs reviewed, the findings should be viewed as trends which *might be* representative of similar types of law enforcement agencies across the country.

HOW TO ORDER

To order a copy of ***A Trend Analysis of Traffic Law Enforcement in the United States*** (92 pages), write to the Office of Research and Traffic Records, NHTSA, NTS-31, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590, or fax (202) 366-7096, or download from www.nhtsa.dot.gov *Patty Ellison-Potter, Ph.D., was the contract manager.*

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