



Aggressive Driving and Smooth Operator Campaign Facts & Figures

What is Aggressive Driving?

- Aggressive driving is defined as when an individual commits a combination of moving traffic offenses that endangers other people or property. These offenses include running red lights and stop signs, following too closely (tailgating), changing lanes unsafely, failing to yield the right of way, improper passing, and speeding.

What is the Smooth Operator Program?

- Founded in 1997, *Smooth Operator* is a public safety campaign that targets aggressive drivers in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia.
- Originally the program started with only 18 law enforcement agencies, but it has grown year-by-year to involve more than 90 agencies from the region.
- *Smooth Operator* uses the following 3-E's approach to tackle aggressive driving:
 1. Enforcement
 2. Education
 3. Evaluation

2009 Focus: The Dangers of Speeding

- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), **speeding was a contributing factor in one third of all fatal crashes in 2007. The probability of death and debilitating injury grows with impacts at higher speeds – doubling for every 10 mph over 50 mph that a vehicle travels.**
- NHTSA estimates that crashes caused by **speeding cost society more than \$40.4 billion a year or approximately \$44,193 per minute.**
- According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), approximately **70 percent of motorists exceed posted speed limits.**
- According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, **each year for the last 11 years, more law enforcement officers have been killed in traffic incidents than from any other single cause of death.**

Speeding and Other Aggressive Driving in Work Zones

- NHTSA reports that **speeding was a component in 32 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred in construction/maintenance zones in 2007.**
- FHWA reports that **fatal work zone crashes occur most often in the summer and the fall.**
- In 2007, FHWA estimates that nationally **a work zone fatality happens every 10 hours, and a work zone injury happens every 13 minutes.**

What Has Smooth Operator Accomplished?

- Almost three million citations have been issued to aggressive drivers since the program began in 1997.
- Citations during 2008 totaled more than 319,000, a little over five times the 62,000 citations issued the year of the program's inception.
- Awareness of the *Smooth Operator* aggressive driving message by 18 to 24 year olds increased 13% from 2007 to 2008, rising from 47 percent to 60 percent over the duration of the 2008 campaign. 25 to 34 year olds reported a 10 percent increase in awareness reporting 37 percent in May and 47 percent in September.

About the 2009 Campaign

- This year's campaign focuses on speeding.
- Speeding through work zones is particularly dangerous. With numerous large-scale road construction projects underway throughout the region this summer, slowing down when driving through work zones is even more important.
- Radio and TV ads will be seen and heard on area stations in conjunction with law enforcement waves scheduled throughout the summer. Outdoor billboards, advertisements on the backs of buses and Internet advertising also will spread the message that law enforcement is out in force and will be ticketing speeders and other aggressive drivers.
- The 2009 law enforcement wave dates are:
 - May 31 – June 6
 - July 5 – 11
 - August 2 – 8
 - September 6-19
- During the waves, law enforcement from more than 90 participating agencies in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia will be looking out for aggressive driving behaviors.

Looking to the Future

Aggressive driving is a long-term problem that can be addressed effectively through sustained strategic effort. In the future, *Smooth Operator* will:

- Continue to raise public awareness about the dangers of aggressive driving.
- Work to make aggressive driving a higher priority on social, political, legal and judicial agendas
- Continue to raise the visibility of law enforcement efforts on roads and highways.
- Continue to promote the use of technology such as laser imaging, red light and speed enforcement cameras, and to gain acceptance for these measures from the motoring public.
- Ensure that prosecutors persistently charge violators.
- Ensure that judges convict and sentence offenders.

Tips from the Smooth Operator Program on How to Avoid Aggressive Drivers

- **Get out** of their way and steer clear of them on the road.
- **Stay relaxed.** Remember that reaching your destination safely and calmly is your goal.
- **Don't challenge** them. Avoid eye contact.
- **Ignore** rude gestures and refuse to return them.
- **Give** them the benefit of the doubt. Not all aggressive driving behavior is directed at you.
- **Don't block** the passing lane, especially if you are driving slower than most of the traffic. Move to the right lane.
- **Dial #77** on a cell phone to report aggressive drivers or call your local police when you can.

Tips from the Smooth Operator Program on How to Avoid Being an Aggressive Driver

- **Obey** posted speed limits.
- **Allow more** travel time to get to your destination. It reduces stress dramatically.
- **Come to a full stop** at red lights and stop signs. Never run yellow lights.
- **Let other drivers** merge with you.
- **Don't** ever follow other drivers too closely.
- **Resist temptation** to teach someone "a lesson."
- **Concentrate** on driving, not on cell phones, stereo, passengers or other distractions.
- **Remember that you can't control** traffic, but you can control yourself, your driving, and you emotions.

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