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A weekly Q&A
with local
law enforcement

Submit your question to news@owatonna.com or 444-2379

Q: Please tell us about the noise ordinance(s). What are the enforcement problems? Are they being enforced? What are you going to do to improve enforcement of the loud exhaust ordinance this summer?

A: There are multiple city ordinances and state law regulating vehicle noise ranging from loud exhaust, loud music, and the squealing of tires. MSS 169.69 states, "Every motor vehicle shall at all times be equipped with a muffler in good working order which blends the exhaust noise into the overall vehicle noise and is in constant operation to prevent excessive or unusual noise, and no person shall use a muffler cutout, bypass, or similar device upon a motor vehicle. The exhaust system shall not emit or produce a sharp popping or crackling sound." City Code 1082:20(2)(g)(1) is similar to the state law pertaining to loud exhaust in which it requires that the muffler "blends exhaust noise into the overall vehicle noise to prevent excessive or unusual noise, such as sharp popping or crackling sounds." Many people make the mistake of purchasing after market muffler systems without realizing they are unlawful to use.

As the weather gets warmer, more drivers will have their vehicle windows down, which will make noise from inside the vehicle more audible. City Code 1082:20(2)(c) requires that noise from radios, tape players, compact disc players, or other devices producing sound must not be "audible by any person from a distance of fifty feet or a distance of five motor vehicle lengths or more from the source, whichever is the lesser." It is good practice and courteous to keep the noise level in your vehicle down for your individual enjoyment so that other drivers and pedestrians nearby can enjoy their own music or peace.

City Code 700:35(1) states, "No person shall operate a vehicle on a public highway, street, parking lot, alley or public property in such manner as to cause the tires to squeal, the gears to grind, or the motor to backfire, except when an emergency creates the necessity for such operation."

Police officers are not omnipresent and therefore cannot stop every vehicle committing a traffic violation. Significant time and effort is put into traffic enforcement in order to provide safety and educate the citizens of Owatonna about traffic laws in a professional manner. The ordinances and state law I have discussed are being enforced by the officers of the Owatonna Police Department when they are observed. These ordinances and state law are in place to maintain the peace and safety of all citizens.

OFFICER SEAN COOPER #7134

Owatonna Police Department