



# 10-4

A weekly Q&A  
with the Owatonna  
Police Department

Submit your question to [news@owatonna.com](mailto:news@owatonna.com) or 444-2379

Driving might be the most dangerous thing you do as you go about your day. Considering that in 2006, 78,745 traffic crashes were reported to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, 494 people died as a result of being in a traffic crash, overall resulting in \$1.6 billion estimated economic cost to Minnesota. Among all drivers, young people and males are most likely to be involved in a traffic crash. Teenage drivers in traffic crashes consist of 7 percent of all licensed drivers, yet they are responsible for 14 percent of all crashes. Needless to say, traffic crashes are the leading cause of death to young people. In 2006, 196 of the 494 people killed in traffic crashes in this state consisted of people under the age of 30. The human factors associated with these reported crashes indicate that driver inattention/distraction and illegal and unsafe speed were the leading factors responsible for the crashes that occurred.

Traffic enforcement is the most recognizable and universal police function. Marked police cars are easy to see and most Americans have been stopped for a traffic violation. Because of the punitive consequences attached to traffic enforcement, many do not have an appreciation for the positive benefits.

The Owatonna Police Department approaches public safety with a balanced effort towards our departments' mission of public safety. Traffic enforcement is one of the many responsibilities most officers perform. To help better understand what constitutes a stop sign or failure to yield violation, consider the following:

**Q: What does law enforcement consider a complete stop at a posted stop sign?**

A: By state statute, a STOP is defined as a complete cessation from all movement, even if for a brief moment. Come to a complete stop. Remain stopped until pedestrians and vehicles with the right of way have cleared the intersection. Then proceed with caution.

**Q: Do I have to come to a complete stop at a yield sign?**

A: By state statute, YIELD is defined as slow down or stop, if necessary. Give the right of way to all other vehicles with the right of way to all other vehicles and pedestrians, and wait until it is safe to proceed.

Traffic enforcement can and does contribute to the quality of life in your community. Take the time to understand a police officer's job and know what outcomes we are attempting to accomplish. After all, when was the last time your boss told you to only do your job half-way?

**Shaun E. LaDue**  
*Owatonna Police Chief*