



Perris News

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Perris Ends Year Without a Single Traffic Fatality

Traffic cops call them the “three Es—“education, enforcement and engineering.”

The three elements came together perfectly in the last year, combining to keep Perris from recording a single traffic fatality in the 12 months ending June 14. A veteran Perris motorcycle officer called a fatality-free year “unheard of” for a city that has grown by nearly 25,000 in the last decade and includes several regional and state highways, like the Ramona Expressway and Highway 74.

“Our citizens have demanded public safety and we have tried our best to deliver it,” said Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough. “The resources we have applied are making a difference. The money the public has entrusted to us is literally saving lives.”

The City Council has authorized additional traffic police, and the City’s traffic squad has been nearly tripled to eight officers. Perris employs four motorcycle police who patrol throughout the day and four “traffic accident investigation” units who also assist with patrol duties and special enforcement programs.

Traffic Sgt. Cheryl Evans said in the last 12 months, Perris police issued 10,678 traffic citations, impounded 1,528 unsafe and illegally operating vehicles, arrested 271 people on suspicion of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol and conducted eight “DUI” checkpoints. Using money from the state Office of Traffic Safety helped pay for those checkpoints as well as the ongoing “click it or ticket” program that targets seat belt usage.

Targeted efforts concentrate not only on arrests and enforcement, Evans said, but also on public education. The City also has taken a leading role in re-engineering several roadways, which also contribute to reduced accidents. The intersection of Ramona Expressway and Evans Road in the north end of Perris was widened to improve traffic flow. The timing of the traffic signals at Evans and Rider Street was reset for the same reason, and Ethanac Road east of Interstate 215 will be restriped to help reduce the risks of collisions.

“The City is to be commended for its foresight and commitment to ensuring public safety,” said City Engineer Habib Motlagh. “It is impressive and admirable. Without it, none of the improvements would have happened.”

Yarbrough said he’s worried that if a November ballot measure fails, the City will have to reduce its police, fire and emergency medical services. The ballot measure asks residents to pay \$135.88 a year—about \$11 a month—to fund public safety. Homeowners north of Nuevo Road and in the City’s south end would actually see a dramatic reduction in their tax bill, as they already pay from \$274 to \$325 in public safety assessments.

“Without the voters’ approval, we will definitely see a decline in public safety,” Yarbrough said.

Perris motorcycle officers Sergio Alcala and Michael Clepper said the statistics don’t lie. Clepper has been a police officer since 1986 and was one of the original motorcycle police in Perris in 1990. He said he can’t recall a previous year without a fatality. In 2005, he said, the City recorded as many as 14 fatalities. The next year, the number was seven. Soon afterward, the City made its commitment to beefing up its traffic team.

“It’s unheard of,” he said of the success in the last year. “This is no coincidence.”

Alcala said the police department will continue its vigilance. “We are committed to making this work,” he said.



Perris motorcycle officer Sergio Alcala works the radar gun on Citrus Avenue.



Alcala and motorcycle officer Michael Clepper are part of the team that has helped reduce traffic fatalities.