

Oregon Sees 19% Increase in High-Speed Drivers (100-plus mph)

by Bend Weekly News Sources

OSP Report: Drivers clocked at speeds in excess of 130 mph

In spite of tougher laws against high-speed traffic violations enacted at the first of this year, a preliminary six-month review of Oregon State Police (OSP) enforcement statistics indicates Oregon is on track this year to easily stop and cite more drivers at speeds 100 miles per hour (mph) and faster.

Two high speed traffic stops last week are reflective of what OSP troopers continue to see -- drivers traveling at dangerous speeds on our freeways and secondary highways.

On October 15th, OSP Trooper Jess Elzy stopped a 1999 Toyota Corolla driven by Michael Jay Mitchell, age 19, from Gresham, westbound on Highway 26 approaching Gresham at 117 mph. On October 17th, OSP Senior Trooper Ken Andrus stopped a motorcycle operated by Cintia M. Schutt, age 38, from Vancouver, Washington, westbound on Interstate 84 near Corbett at 132 mph. In both cases, the operators were cited for the violations with stiffened penalties (higher fines and mandatory minimum 30 -- 90 day suspensions) as a result of a new Oregon law that took effect January 1, 2006. According to preliminary OSP enforcement data, during the first six months of 2006 OSP troopers issued 258 citations to drivers going 100 mph or faster. This was a 19% increase in comparison to citations issued during the same six-month period in 2005 when 217 citations were issued. Statistics also indicate OSP troopers are on track this year to match the number of speed-related citations issued last year to drivers going 70--79, 80--89, and 90--99 mph. "Where we are seeing the increase are in the higher speed ranges," said Captain Gerry Gregg, Director of the OSP Patrol Services Division. "Citations issued to drivers going 106 mph or faster are on track to easily surpass the number issued last year. In fact, troopers have already given out more citations to drivers going 116 mph or faster during the first six-months than in all of 2005." Captain Gerry Gregg also noted definite increases in some areas on Interstate 5 and Interstate 205, both areas where OSP have positioned four of the five unmarked ADEP (Aggressive Driving Enforcement Plan) patrol vehicles to target high speed and other dangerous drivers. Troopers working in these 4 specially equipped unmarked vehicles have accounted for nearly 15% of all the citations, and about a quarter of the citations issued on Interstate 5, to these high-speed drivers. "The ADEP plan is paying dividends since we started the program a couple years ago," Captain Gregg said. "Troopers in marked and unmarked patrol cars are successfully finding some of these drivers, but we know there are many more dangerous and intoxicated drivers that we are not able to stop because our staffing limits how visible and available we are to be in position to find them." Between January and June 2006, the preliminary OSP

enforcement data reflects the following on interstate freeways: * Twice as many (12) citations have been issued on Interstate 205 as compared with all of 2005 when six were issued. * Troopers issued 23 citations on Interstate 5 between the Oregon/California border and Grants Pass, nearly matching the number (24) issued during all of 2005. * Troopers have already issued about 1/3 more citations (48) from Albany north to Portland as compared to all of 2005 when 35 citations were issued. * Troopers are on track to issue more citations on Interstate 84 from Biggs Jct. east to the Oregon/Idaho border. The statistics also show that young drivers continue to be more likely to drive at high speeds than older drivers are. Over half of all drivers stopped and cited by OSP at 100 mph or faster are between the ages of 15 and 24. More than three-fourths of those were male drivers. Under authority of the new Oregon law (Senate Bill 568), the Department of Motor Vehicles report that driver licenses of convicted high speed drivers are being suspended. Between January 1st and August 31st a total of 212 court-ordered suspensions were posted on those convicted drivers, and the State is on course to suspend approximately 300 drivers for convictions of driving 100 mph or faster. According to Oregon Department of Transportation, excessive speed is a factor in over half of all traffic fatalities and the only factor in 30% of these crashes. Deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for persons of every age from 3 through 33 years old. Last year, there were 44,878 reported traffic crashes in Oregon. These crashes resulted in the deaths of 488 people, a 14% increase over the last 4-year average. In addition, over 29,000 people were injured. A breakdown of OSP-issued citations to drivers going 100 mph will be available on the OSP web site at www.oregon.gov/OSP.

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