



AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

21 ACADIA STREET • AMHERST, NOVA SCOTIA • B4H 1X4 • (902) 667-7227 • FAX: (902) 667-0268

Intersections with traffic control devices will be the focus of the Amherst Police Department for the month of July. A traffic control device could be anything from a stop sign to an intersection that employs a set of traffic lights. These intersections will be monitored by the Amherst Police Department to make sure that everyone is complying with the law.

Under Section 93(2)(e) of the Motor Vehicle Act, motorists failing to stop at red light will cost drivers a fine of \$176.45. Motorists who contravene Section 133(1) of the Motor Vehicle Act (Failing to stop at stop sign) will receive a similar fine. Both fines will cost two points off a driver's license.

Residents should be mindful that amber lights are cautionary lights informing drivers that the lights are about to turn red. Amber lights are warnings to stop your vehicle. Many drivers who see the lights turn amber will tend to speed up so they can get through the intersection. This can be the source of most collisions. Of course, stopping at an amber light must also be done so in a safe manner. If a traffic light turns from green to amber and your vehicle has hit "the point of no return" then you are allowed to continue at a safe speed through the intersection. When I say point of no return, I am meaning the ability to safely stop your motor vehicle.

One safety tip that I always use when at a set of lights is to watch the intersection closely before entering into it. I will also pause for a second or so before proceeding after my light has turned green. This slight pause delays my vehicle from entering the intersection and being struck by another vehicle that is running the lights. Many motorists seem to want to bolt through the intersection at the second the light turns green and this may cause us and our passengers to get into an avoidable collision.

In the United States, between 1992 and 2000, fatal crashes at traffic lights increased by 19 percent. This statistic outpaced the rise seen in other fatal related crashes. According to the Federal Highway Administration and Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, *each year red-light running causes as many as 218,000 crashes that result in over 800 deaths and 180,000 injuries*. I would imagine that our statistics in Canada would be proportional to what is seen in the U.S.

In Nova Scotia, unless there is a sign prohibiting you from doing so, a vehicle can legally make a right hand turn on a red light. One thing motorists have to understand though is that the motorist must stop first before making this turn and only execute the turn in a safe manner. From my experience, many motorists will approach a red light and turn right without stopping. These drivers are essentially going through a red light and these incidents will most likely cause motorists to receive a summary offence ticket.

Stop signs will be another focus for our Department. Some issues that Police tend to see with stop signs is that motorists will not stop at the correct stopping point at an intersection. Motorists also tend to “roll” through stop signs. When enforcing stop signs, I always watch the wheels of a vehicle and I am looking to make sure that the wheels cease their rotation as motorists stop at a stop sign. The best rule of thumb is to wait a couple of seconds before proceeding after stopping, and motorists should be constantly scanning their environment for pedestrians, vehicles and other dangers on the roadway.

According to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, there were 13,627 cars involved in fatal automobile collisions caused by running a stop sign in 1999 and 2000. Stop sign violations accounted for about 70% of all crashes. Typically these crashes were angular collisions. In about two-thirds of stop sign violation crashes, drivers said they had first come to a stop. In these cases, the motorist’s inability or failure to see approaching traffic was often cited as the cause of the crash. Drivers younger than 18 as well as drivers 65 and older were disproportionately found to be at fault in crashes at stop signs.

Our police Department has issued ten summary offence tickets to stop sign violators in 2014. This isn’t a huge number by any stretch of the imagination. We do, however, receive complaints from the public of intersections where motorists are failing to stop on a consistent basis. These areas will be the target for July’s focused enforcement efforts. This is the time of the year where most of our residents are travelling, whether it is on a trip to the cottage or a vacation far away. Our police department would like to wish everyone a safe and collision free driving summer.