

Executive Officer Corner/ Traffic Safety



Capt. Oliver Pufolkes

The Big Apple is known for being a fast paced City. Pedestrians navigate through the densely populated streets of the Upper Eastside among the throngs of vehicles that command the roadways, which include yellow cabs as an overrepresented population of users of the roads. In just the past 28 day period (December 23, 2013 – January 19, 2014), taxi cabs were involved in 46% of all traffic collisions occurring in this neighborhood.

The 19th Precinct is proactively leading in the reduction of traffic violence, which places pedestrians in harms way. We are proud of our modest success to start the new calendar year (2014) with a 21% reduction in pedestrian injuries resulting from traffic collisions.

Using our data-driven performance management system (Traffic Stat) there are lessons we have gleaned from looking at data for the past calendar year (2013). Last year 59% of pedestrians that were involved in traffic collisions were 61 years of age or older, and 59% of the contributing factor was either driver inattention or drivers' failure to yield right of way to pedestrians – typically during a turn. Pedestrian error accounted for 10% of those collisions. A thorough investigation by our Department's Highway Collision Scene Unit revealed that 80% of the pedestrian fatalities (4 out of 5) that occurred last year were due to pedestrian error.

Taxi Cabs
were involved
in 46% of traf-
fic
collisions

The 19th Precinct has the second most dense neighborhood in the City. This includes the 86th Street/ Lexington Avenue subway station, one of the most used subway stations, and the Ed Koch/59th St Bridge, which is the City's busiest City-owned bridge with over 200,000 motorists coming into the command's borders every workday. Simply put, we have more people negotiating the use of public streets with more cars than just about anywhere else in the City of New York.

The 19th Precinct will incorporate lessons learned and make it imperative to focus on the following:

- 1) Increase our efforts to ensure the safety of the elderly through strategies that will be discussed in future publications to include greater enforcement against motorists for infractions that contribute to these collisions.
- 2) Since taxis make up on average 40% of the roads' users involved in collisions, our plan will include even more collaboration with TLC to enforce road infractions by cab drivers.
- 3) Continue to work with agency resources such as the NYPD's Citywide Traffic Task Force and other City partners to reduce collisions and promote the safe use of public streets.

Executive Officer Corner/ Traffic Safety continued

Finally, considering that pedestrian fatalities were largely caused by pedestrian error, we will strengthen our educational awareness program significantly and will immediately incorporate the use of our Auxiliary police by deploying them to our top three Pedestrian Collision prone locations to distribute safety tips for pedestrians, assist the elderly crossing the streets, and to assist in the prevention of jay walking.

In collaboration with the various stakeholders to include agency partners like DOT and TLC, and the community, we believe our sum efforts will improve the safety for all who use the public streets and roadways of the upper Eastside.

Safety Tips for Pedestrians

Put Yourself in the Driver's Seat!

- Drivers don't expect to see you step out from between parked cars. Move out to the edge of the parked cars. Then stop, look and listen before you cross.
- A vehicle travelling at 30 mph may need up to 125 ft to come to a complete stop. Avoid darting out into the street!
- Check to see that no vehicles are coming before you push your stroller into the street.
- Be especially careful crossing streets during inclement weather. Drivers may not be able to stop in time.
- Large vehicles need more room to turn; beware of back wheels mounting the sidewalk.
- Look in all directions before you begin to cross, even if there is a green light or a walk signal in your direction.
- Try to make eye contact with driver's of turning vehicles. This will make sure he is aware of your intentions on crossing the street.

It can be just as deadly to walk under the influence of alcohol or medication as it is to drive under the influence. If you are taking medication which causes drowsiness or dizziness, walk with someone who is alert. In 1998, one out of every ten pedestrians killed were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

In current times, engaging in text messaging while crossing the street, may be just as dangerous.

