

OPP urges motorists to drive according to conditions

As Ontario continues to get battered by one of the worst winters in recent history, The Commissioner of OPP and the Provincial Commander of Traffic Safety and Operational Support (TSOS) are taking a hard line.

Police report numerous drivers have, through poor driving behaviour, been causing a steady rash of collisions, some of which are jeopardizing the safety of officers and other emergency personnel responding to collision scenes.

Three OPP cruisers were struck early last week by passing motorist. One officer was taken to hospital after his cruiser was struck from behind while stopped behind a transport truck. The previous weekend saw eight OPP cruisers struck and two officers received minor injuries.

"I want to make it very clear," declared OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis. "Severe weather and poor driving conditions are not the main cause in the overwhelming number of collisions we've seen these past several weeks. It is the way people are driving in these conditions that jeopardizes the safety of the motoring public and our officers. This irresponsible driving behaviour must stop."

OPP has been inundated with calls for service during the numerous storms that have hit the province so far this winter. Officers have responded to thousands of calls due to irresponsible driving in winter conditions.

Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, provincial commander of TSOS, said this is unacceptable.

"There is no question that our harsh winter weather has made for some very treacherous driving conditions lately, but as is the case every winter, it is the drivers who do not adjust their driving to the weather and driving conditions that are usually the ones involved in the collisions," he said. "Most of the crashes being investigated by our officers involve drivers who either lost control because they did not slow down when they needed to or who ignored our warnings to avoid non-essential travel when the weather was particularly severe."

According to Blair, when driving in particularly bad weather, it is not enough to keep your speed below the posted limit. Drivers need to slow right down. This is critical to maintaining control of a vehicle and avoiding a collision.

Lewis and Blair are also stressing the importance of being highly visible while out on the road when visibility is poor. This means driving with the full set of headlights on. OPP has received a number of complaints from people who continue to observe motorists driving in poor visibility with just their daytime running lights on. In heavy snowfall or blowing snow, these vehicles cannot be seen well by drivers and they are virtually invisible to those who approach from behind.

OPP is urging motorists to be prepared and pay careful attention during the winter. Watch for emergency responders, slow down and move over if it is safe to do so in accordance with the law. Adjust driving to the conditions and keep passengers and all other road users safe.