

**REPORT OF THE
VIRGINIA STATE POLICE**

Increased Enforcement on Interstate 81

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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December 1, 2006

TO: The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine, Governor of Virginia

The Honorable John H. Chichester
Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Vincent F. Callahan, Jr.
Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee

Pursuant to Item 457 B.2. of Chapter 951 of the 2005 Virginia Acts of Assembly, I am respectfully submitting herewith, a *Report on Increased Enforcement on Interstate 81*. The report is a compilation of the department's enforcement efforts during the period July 1, 2005, through June 30, 2006.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. S. Flaherty".

Superintendent

WSF/

Enclosure

Increased Enforcement on Interstate 81

Preface

Pursuant to Item 457 B.2. of Chapter 951 of the 2005 Virginia Acts of Assembly, I am respectfully submitting herewith, a *Report on Increased Enforcement on Interstate 81*. This report is a compilation of the department's overtime enforcement efforts during the period July 1, 2005, through June 30, 2006.

History

Construction on Interstate 81 began in 1957 and was completed in 1987. Interstate 81 spans 325 miles of Virginia and runs north and south along the spine of the Appalachian Mountains. It was originally constructed as a four lane, divided, limited access highway. This remains true today, except some small areas of the roadway have been expanded to allow for additional traffic lanes.

Interstate 81 is a major north/south thoroughfare. Over the years, growth along the communities adjacent to the interstate and the increased demands for goods and services have created a tremendous volume of both passenger and commercial motor vehicle traffic. This increase in traffic has ultimately led to more congestion, more traffic crashes, and a significant increase in citizen complaints of poor driving behavior.

In response to the increase in traffic-related problems on Interstate 81 in Virginia, the Virginia General Assembly allocated \$110,000 per fiscal year to be used to compensate Virginia State Troopers for working in an overtime status along the Interstate 81 corridor. The funds were approved for three fiscal years: 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008.

Analysis

State Police managers met to discuss how to most effectively utilize the monies. The panel of lieutenants considered traffic volume; large events along the Interstate 81 corridor, such as college football games and racing events; and crash demographics to establish enforcement methodologies. Since commercial vehicles are often the target of citizen complaints, some of the selected dates/times were chosen because traffic data supports high volumes of these types of vehicle. The times selected for each project corresponded with the target event or situation.

When scheduling the dates for the projects, the panel decided the four State Police field divisions that have Interstate 81 responsibilities would participate in each project. The troopers would saturate the entire 325 mile stretch of Interstate 81 from West Virginia to Tennessee on the selected dates of enforcement.

The four affected State Police field divisions are as follows:

Division II	Frederick, Shenandoah, and Rockingham Counties
Division III	Augusta County
Division IV	Pulaski, Wythe, Smyth, and Washington Counties
Division VI	Rockbridge, Botetourt, Roanoke, and Montgomery Counties

The dates/times selected were as follows:

Date	Time
August 27, 2005	3 p.m. – 11 p.m.
September 18, 2005	6 p.m. – 2 a.m.
September 24, 2005	8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
October 8, 2005	8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
November 5, 2005	8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
November 19, 2005	7 a.m. – 3 p.m.
December 9, 2005	6 p.m. – 2 a.m.
January 12, 2006	2 p.m. – 10 p.m.
February 14, 2006	1 p.m. – 9 p.m.
March 1, 2006	10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
April 23, 2006	3 p.m. – 11 p.m.
May 14, 2006	12 p.m. – 8 p.m.
June 9, 2006	5 a.m. – 1 p.m.
June 15, 2006	3 p.m. – 11 p.m.

The funds were appropriated by the General Assembly to compensate Virginia State Police Troopers for working outside their normal work hours on Interstate 81, strictly enforcing the motor vehicle code in an effort to reduce complaints and motor vehicle crashes. The troopers who participated in this enforcement project volunteered to work the project on their day(s) off for overtime pay. The reason troopers were paid overtime to work outside their normal work schedules was to prevent any negative impact upon the regular patrol of Interstate 81 or other highways in the Commonwealth. This concept was extremely beneficial to the Virginia State Police workforce. The troopers assigned to the project were not extracted from daily assignments.

The Virginia Department of State Police named this enforcement project “Operation Cruise Control.” Colonel W. Steven Flaherty felt this was an appropriate title for an enforcement project; if citizens were encouraged to use their cruise control functions as they travel along Virginia’s roadways, they would be less likely to speed, drive aggressively, follow too closely, etc. This theme was consistently relayed to the media throughout year.

Methodology

After analyzing crash data and being familiar with the types of citizen complaints lodged against drivers along Interstate 81, the panel created a plan of action designed to effectively target the types of behaviors that led to crashes and citizen complaints. Emphasis was placed on aggressive drivers, reckless drivers, speeding, unsafe lane change, following too closely, and driving under the influence.

Since many complaints and 15 to 20 percent of all crashes involved commercial motor vehicles, special emphasis was placed on targeting trucks that violate the law. The department's Safety Division contains troopers with enhanced training in federal motor carrier regulations. These troopers have special enforcement powers that give them the authority to conduct a roadside inspection of a commercial motor vehicle and take the commercial vehicle out of service for serious safety issues such as defective brakes or operating too many hours without rest. Troopers assigned to the Safety Division are dispersed throughout the state. The panel felt these troopers would be vital to the success of the project.

The panel also decided marked, unmarked, covert, and slick-top vehicles would be used for the project. Marked vehicles stand as a deterrent to motorists. When used on patrol, these cars are readily recognized by the motoring public; their mere presence makes citizens pay attention to their driving behavior and operate their vehicles in a safe, courteous and orderly manner.

The covert vehicles are not marked with State Police decals, license plates, or any other obvious police paraphernalia. The antennas are kept to a minimum and often the car itself is a vehicle that is not traditionally known as a police car, such as a Dodge Intrepid or a Chevrolet Impala. Experience has proven these vehicles to have been extremely successful as a traffic enforcement tool. Because they are not readily recognized as a police vehicle, other drivers will often speed past them and drive recklessly around them. The troopers who drive these vehicles report the ease of pacing vehicles at high rates of speed and identifying reckless driving behavior without being detected.

Chevrolet Camaros and slick-top enforcement cars were also used. Although these cars are marked with traditional State Police decals, their blue emergency lights are contained within the front and rear windows of the vehicles. The motoring public is oblivious to these enforcement vehicles because the cars do not fit the public's police car paradigm. The Camaros and slick tops are great for pacing and identifying vehicles following too closely, improperly passing, and committing other violations.

Our unmarked cars are beginning to look less like police vehicles due to new antenna placement. Although some drivers easily recognize these vehicles and refrain from violating the law while around these cars, some drivers do not immediately differentiate these cars and, thus, pass them at significant speeds.

The department is well armed with speed detection devices. Each vehicle assigned to Operation Cruise Control was equipped with standard RADAR or the new LIDAR, which is a laser speed detection device. Furthermore, some of the police cars have RADAR detector detectors. RADAR detector detectors send a

signal to the trooper indicating when a vehicle is equipped with a RADAR detector.

Aerial speed enforcement via VASCAR was also used to identify vehicles traveling in excess of the posted speed limit. Aerial speed enforcement has proven to be an effective tool because few people look to the sky for law enforcement speed detection.

During Operation Cruise Control, the troopers used a variety of patrol techniques, such as stationary patrol in which the trooper remained stationary off the side of the highway observing traffic, utilizing speed detection equipment, and identifying violators. Moving patrol by marked police vehicles was used to slow the pace of traffic. Moving patrol by unmarked/covert vehicles was used to identify aggressive drivers and take enforcement action.

Perhaps one of the most useful tools utilized by the State Police was the media. The public information officers assigned to each of the seven State Police field divisions reached out to the media to publicize the enforcement project and warn the motoring public of the increased State Police presence. After the projects, local media would collect statistical enforcement data for inclusion in newspapers, radio broadcasts and the evening news.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) was extremely helpful in getting the message out to the motoring public. VDOT programmed their message boards along the interstate to send a message to the motoring public about Operation Cruise Control.

Enforcement Results

All the Operation Cruise Control enforcement projects were held as scheduled. Cumulatively, the Department of State Police issued a total of 4,979 summonses and arrests. This included 14 felony arrests, 32 drug arrests, 56 misdemeanor arrests, 15 driving under the influence arrests, 659 reckless driving summonses, and 2,695 speeding summonses. A complete list of the total summonses/arrests by each State Police field division is attached. (See Appendix A.)

Over the course of the fourteen project dates, troopers worked a total of 2,952 hours (369 eight-hour shifts) and drove 49,790 miles.

Future Projects

These enforcement dates and times have been scheduled for the 2006-2007 fiscal year:

Date	Time
November 17, 2006	8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
December 8, 2006	8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
December 15, 2006	8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
January 24, 2007	8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
February 14, 2007	10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
March 17, 2007	2 p.m. - 10 p.m.
March 30, 2007	6 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 19, 2007	1 p.m. - 9 p.m.
April 28, 2007	2 p.m. - 10 p.m.
May 19, 2007	9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
May 21, 2007	6 a.m. - 2 p.m.
June 3, 2007	2 p.m. - 10 p.m.
June 14, 2007	6 a.m. - 2 p.m.
June 23, 2007	6 a.m. - 2 p.m.

The 2006/2007 Operation Cruise Control projects were set using the same analysis used in the previous fiscal year projects. The enforcement methodologies will be the same with a few additional enforcement tools such as the Dodge Chargers.

Although the results of the department's enforcement efforts have been displayed in the impressive enforcement statistics presented in this report, the affects of Operation Cruise Control are harder to gage. Increased visibility on enforcement dates causes more people to be mindful of their driving behavior. However, with only fourteen enforcement dates, our effect is short lived.

The monies expended to pay troopers overtime on these enforcement projects has resulted in a significant number of traffic summonses as well as criminal arrests. It is without a doubt our increased presence on the selected dates caused drivers to slow down, drive more safely, pay more attention, and likely prevented crashes.

With our enforcement dates set for the 2006-2007 fiscal year, we look forward to future successes with Operation Cruise Control projects.

**Operation Cruise Control Enforcement Results
2005-2006 Fiscal Year**

	Division II	Division III	Division IV	Division VI	Safety Division	Total
Felony Arrest	7	6	0	1	0	14
Drug Arrest	17	3	12	0	0	32
Misdemeanor	27	5	18	6	0	56
DUI	8	2	2	2	1	15
Reckless Driving	207	79	209	153	11	659
Speeding	788	426	735	627	119	2695
Equipment	157	21	161	51	9	399
Seatbelt	92	22	79	40	1	234
Child Restraint	9	1	10	7	0	27
License Violation	85	31	66	49	2	233
Other	151	74	243	130	17	615
Total	1548	670	1535	1066	160	4979

Appendix A