

Oh, Those Summertime Traffic Blues...

Cindy Genau

Memorial Day weekend has arrived! I think most of us get excited about this holiday as it marks the beginning of summer. Schools are winding down for the year, there are graduations to celebrate, and vacations to think about. Memorial Day weekend is considered the opening of the summer season at most resorts. As a result, it is also the time when many more cars will be clogging the highways on the weekends. On top of that, it is the time when lots of construction and repairs are done on roadways everywhere. This adds to the congestion and delays for cars headed to their favorite weekend get away. Those driving in the congestion often suffer from the blues as they wait in lines of miles of cars backed up on the highway. Sometimes, it seems you need a vacation from your vacation due to the struggles encountered on the road during the summer.

When drivers of vehicles aren't happy on the roads ----sometimes they display their frustration by driving aggressively. Aggressive driving seems to get worse when traffic is delayed because it takes three times as long to reach your destination and there is nothing you can do about it. As the price of gas soars, something else we have no control of, many of us are looking to make that tank of gas last as long as possible. So extra delays irritate us more as we waste time idling in traffic backups. So we tend to try to take shortcuts by breaking some of the traffic laws like speeding, weaving in and out of traffic, tailgating, running late yellow/red lights, not yielding to drivers and pedestrians, and driving on the shoulder of the road. All of these behaviors tend to cause problems on the roadway by increasing the chance of a collision. Collisions only make the congestion and delays worse for everyone. This is the opposite result of what is intended – more delays rather than less...The other serious consequence of collisions is that many result in someone being injured or killed. Fourteen people lost their lives in fatal crashes in about as many days just this past month.

In response to the crowded roadways and those summer driving blues, the Office of Highway Safety and law enforcement are again turning up the "HEAT" on traffic violators by launching their "120 Days of Summer HEAT" (Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic) safety campaign. During the 120 days of summer from Memorial Day to Labor Day, officers will be targeting enforcement of seatbelt laws, drinking and driving laws, and aggressive driving laws. The goal of all of these campaigns is to make the public aware that traffic offenders will receive violations for creating an unsafe environment on our roadways which leads to injuries and death. We have lost 38 lives in traffic collisions in 2008. Speeding is the second leading cause of traffic death in Delaware.

The best way to protect you and your family as you travel this summer is to avoid being one of those summertime blues drivers. Take your time --- relax, you can not control the delays so find ways to make them bearable or even fun. Think of the time on the road as a time to spend some dedicated time with your family. At backups talk about what everyone wants to do during vacation, plan how many nights you will eat out, play games like who can find the most hybrid cars on the road, take turns playing each family members favorite CD or favorite radio station, play word games, have each family member talk about what they consider the best vacation they ever had or what their worst vacation was and what their dream vacation would be like. Travelling should be an enjoyable experience so make it one by controlling your attitude on the road and following traffic laws. The most important law by far to keep you're your family safe and happy while driving this summer is the primary seatbelt law – Buckle Up – always, everyone in the car, and before you leave the driveway. Then if you run into one of those summertime blues drivers or they literally run into you – you will be protected and able to enjoy your vacation. Happy Memorial Day weekend and travel safe...