

## Speeding in Neighborhoods Puts Pedestrians at Risk By Cindy Genau

Education about traffic safety is what I do for a living, and believe me; it is hard to not think about that topic daily--- wherever I am or whatever I am doing. I can be working at a health fair, reading, watching a movie, talking to friends, driving, or walking and some incident will be brought to my attention about poor driving. So, the recent City of Newark Council Meeting minutes caught my eye. There was a discussion at the June meeting about speeding in Newark in local neighborhoods. The question was --- what can be done to calm traffic? How do we get drivers to avoid speeding through residential areas? A discussion of passing a local ordinance to amend the penalties for speeding followed.

Who is at risk when speeding occurs in neighborhoods??? Pedestrians. One councilman stated that speeding in residential neighborhoods is the number one issue constituents contact him about on a regular basis. Pedestrian traffic safety is a big issue for Newark City Council and the Newark Police Department. One comment from a council representative was that a message should be sent that the city of Newark is serious about being pedestrian friendly. What would be the best way to get that message across to violators? The answer --- to have speeding fines strictly enforced.

Two statewide campaigns on speed enforcement were launched recently. It is evident that this is a problem for many cities and neighborhoods across the state, not just Newark. The first campaign launched by the Delaware Office of Highway Safety, in collaboration with DELDOT, the Delaware State Police, and local police agencies, is its Speed Enforcement campaign as the focus of its final part of 120 Days of Summer HEAT. Speeding was the most frequently cited behavior when aggressive driving was the cause of a fatal crash. So what is the intent of the campaign? The goal of the campaign is to stop and arrest speeding drivers. What are the consequences of speeding? It can cost you or someone else their life, will cost you money in fines and higher insurance rates, and wastes more money in gas consumption. Officers will be targeting secondary residential roads where the chances of a crash are higher than on the highways and where pedestrians are more vulnerable. At the present, we have had 10 pedestrian deaths in 2008 on Delaware roadways compared to 7 in 2007.

The second campaign sponsored by the Delaware Department of Transportation (DELDOT) is also aimed at reducing the number of drivers who speed in residential areas and to educate drivers about the danger of speeding in neighborhoods as to pedestrians. The legal speed limit in Delaware's neighborhoods is 25 mph. Most crashes happen close to home and at low speeds. The fatality rate in residential areas due to car crashes is 3 times that of those occurring on the highway. When vehicles are travelling at 30 mph, 45% of pedestrians hit by a car will die of injuries. If you increase the rate of the car to 40 mph, 85% of pedestrians hit by a car will die. Vehicle crashes are also the leading cause of death to children 2 to 14 years of age. What is DELDOT's campaign message to drivers??? Slow down while driving in neighborhoods! Expect to see pedestrians walking in the roadway or outside of crosswalks. Pedestrians may not be as visible as they should be.

The other side of this issue is how can pedestrians protect themselves in neighborhoods in case of speeding drivers? Pedestrians should follow these safety tips:

- Use the sidewalks in residential areas
- Cross at crosswalks or intersections not midblock
- If not crossing at an intersection, pedestrians must yield to the motorist
- If not using a sidewalk, pedestrians must walk facing traffic as far as possible toward the edge of the road.
- Look left, right, and left again before leaving the curb to cross

When I talk about pedestrian safety, the most important tip most pedestrians aren't aware of is that the law states that pedestrians walking at night are required to carry a flashlight or other reflective item.

Motorists --- please share the road responsibly by driving the legal posted speed limit. Slow down in residential areas and be prepared to stop suddenly for a pedestrian. Remember DELDOT's message that their well-being depends on you.

Pedestrians --- take a moment to follow the rules and tips of traffic safety listed in your Delaware Driver's manual. Most importantly, use the sidewalk, crosswalks, and make yourself visible to motorists who may be speeding.

Remember, we can share the road and keep each other safe whether we are driving or walking.