

# Beware jaywalkers!

## Lincoln police officers crack down on traffic violations

By Linda Renken  
Staff Reporter

Pedestrian violations cause half of all car-pedestrian accidents, a Lincoln Police Department captain said.

Capt. Jim Baird said a trend of violations are occurring that, if continued, could result in serious accidents. He noticed increases in jaywalking, congested downtown traffic and drivers failing to yield to walkers.

Baird said Lincoln Police decided to "step up" enforcement last May.

More time was allocated for enforcement of these violations, he said. The six foot-patrol officers were given certain high-violation areas of downtown Lincoln to enforce, he said.

The officers issued written warnings for jaywalking and occasionally issued written tickets to disobedient walkers, he said.

Drivers who failed to yield or ran red lights were issued either written warnings or tickets, he said.

Between May and August, Baird said, approximately 600 written warnings

were issued to jaywalkers, while 700 written warnings and tickets were given to drivers.

Baird said three issues were considered when deciding how to decrease these violations.

The main objective was to increase public compliance through education. Once aware, enforcement was needed to insure that residents expected to get a citation if they violated a pedestrian or traffic law, he said.

Another objective was to check any engineering changes that were needed to increase public awareness and obedience, he said.

Richard Haden, city traffic engineer, said that his department experimented with the use of symbols instead of the traditional "walk" and "don't walk" signals. The experimental lights, installed at the 13th and O street intersection have shown that pedestrians find a symbol more desirable than a message. The symbols, which are international signs, display a walking figure for the "walk" light and a flashing palm for the "don't walk."

Jim Viger, a city engineering technician, said that increased public awareness of the signals is an indirect benefit; cost is the real benefit.

Viger said the current walk signals cost \$165,000 a year in electric bills, which is taken out of the department's budget. Each unit uses \$410 of electricity annually.

The new signals will use \$90 of electricity, resulting in a \$320 savings a year per intersection, he said.

The initial cost of replacing the "walk" signals would be \$1,500 for each intersection. Viger plans to have 292 single units replaced at 36 intersections including signals along O street, 9th and 10th streets and at school crossings. The installments will pay for themselves in five years, Viger said.

The units have an average life of 15 to 20 years, he said. Current units were installed in 1962 and 1963. Replacement parts are no longer available, he said. Viger said he expects installation of the new signals to begin in the spring.

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