

2013

Punta Gorda Police Department

Traffic Safety and Enforcement Report



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Operations Commander



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Section 1 - Introduction

Forward from the [Chief of Police](#)



The Punta Gorda Police Department is tasked with enhancing the quality of life for the customers we serve, through high-quality, professional public safety services. One very important goal of the department is to ensure that our customers feel safe not only in their homes and neighborhoods, but also wherever they may travel.

Responding to traffic-related calls for service is a responsibility that every law enforcement agency must recognize. The proper allocation of resources to fulfill the needs of our community is a task that must be prioritized based upon current trends and available data.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, statistical data shows that more people are injured or killed as a result of a motor vehicle crash than as a result of a crime. Nationwide, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people age 3 to 33.

The Punta Gorda Police Department's traffic-focused mission is to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs associated with motor vehicle crashes. The development and implementation of this comprehensive enforcement plan will focus on topics such as impaired driving involving alcohol or drugs, safety belt use and child passenger safety laws, aggressive driving, speeding, and other hazardous moving violations.

This document will serve as a framework under which the department may better enhance its traffic-related initiatives through education, safety standards, and enforcement activity and thereby reducing the number of fatalities, injuries, and associated economic losses caused by motor vehicle crashes.

The construction and implementation of this traffic safety and enforcement plan was a culmination of a year-long effort, led by the agency's Operations Commander, Captain Thomas Lewis. It was done in concert with the citizens of Punta Gorda through community focus groups. These meetings targeted the various City neighborhoods and were held at three locations, the Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, and Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association on January 25, 2012, January 26, 2012, and January 30, 2012 respectively.

As we move forward, I would like to personally thank the community stakeholders who took the time to provide their valuable input.

Albert A. "Butch" Arenal
Chief of Police



Traffic Profile of the City of Punta Gorda

According to the [Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization](#), the City of Punta Gorda has approximately 115.5 miles of paved roadways and an additional 2.0 miles of unpaved roadways. A bicycle-friendly community, there are also 5.2 linear miles of off road bicycle paths, not counting bicycle lanes on the roadways, as well as 67.1 miles of sidewalks. It is very important to take into consideration the road functional classification¹ when analyzing total roadway mileage related to traffic safety and enforcement. Although there are subcategories, these classifications are divided into three main categories; arterials, collectors, and local roadways.

Goals and Objectives

- Provide citizens with a high-quality, effective traffic safety and enforcement plan and ensure that policies and procedures are in place to implement traffic education and enforcement functions;
- Maintain aggressive enforcement and education efforts for impaired driving involving alcohol and/or other drugs, safety belt use and child passenger safety, aggressive driving, speed enforcement, distracted driving, and other hazardous moving violations. Data collection and analysis will systematically identify problem areas, both behavioral and geographical, and countermeasures will be initiated to mitigate these problems;
- Develop a cooperative working relationship with other county and local governmental agencies and community organizations on traffic safety issues; and
- Develop performance measures for traffic enforcement that are both qualitative and quantitative.

Data Collection and Analysis

The collection and analysis of valid data is critical to any approach intended to increase roadway safety and subsequently decrease the incidents of vehicle crashes. Data is collected and analyzed to identify opportunities for change and to support specific education and/or enforcement initiatives. An effective data collection system provides accurate, timely information to field personnel who are performing primary traffic functions, and to police management for decision making.

The data provided in this plan was collected from the Punta Gorda Police Department Records Management System (crash reports, daily officer activity, citations and warnings, etc.), as well as the City of Punta Gorda Public Works Department (e.g., traffic volume/counts), state and federal entities, citizen complaints and feedback, and officer observation.

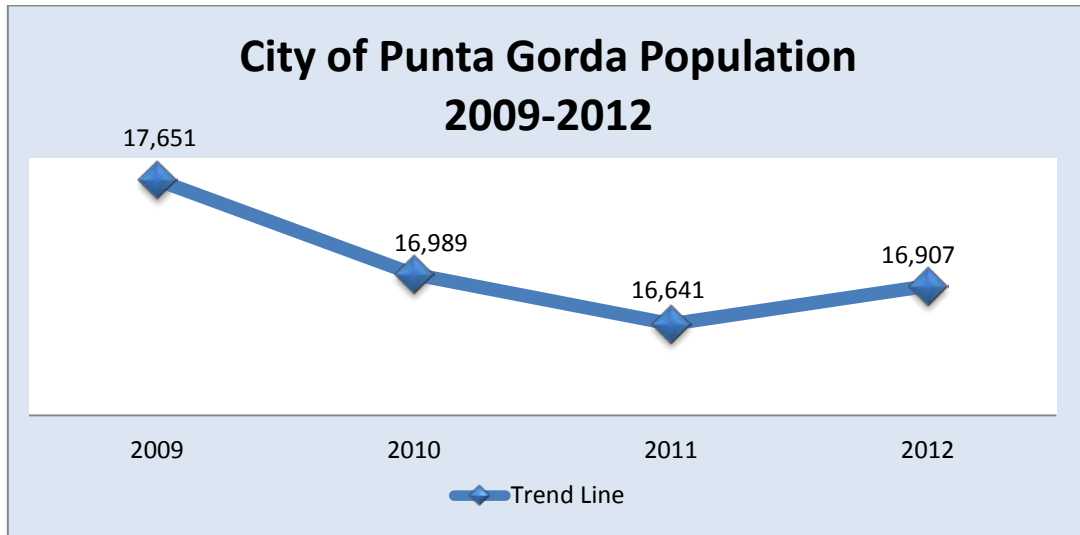
¹ Functional classification defines the character of services that a particular roadway is intended to provide. Roads serve to provide mobility for vehicle access to locations. The process of functional classification was mandated by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and implemented in 1993 by the Office of Transportation Planning in cooperation with the 13 regional planning agencies.



Section 2 – Statistics (Annual Comparisons)

Statistics – Four year comparison

Population²



³Example of actual daily resident and transient vehicle population using our roadways

Roadway	Cross Street	2009 Count June 2009	2010 Count Jan. 2010	2011 Count June 2011	2012 Count May 2012	Average
Bal Harbor	Albatross	5598	7437	5251	2677	5241
Olympia	Shreve (East only)	5189	8290	5247	8082	6702
Cooper	Carmalita	3919	5464	3126	6342	4713
Taylor	Carmalita	4357	6929	5105	5332	5431
Monaco	US 41	3461	3661	3247	4601	3743
Royal Poinciana	US 41	1800	1900	2671	2235	2152

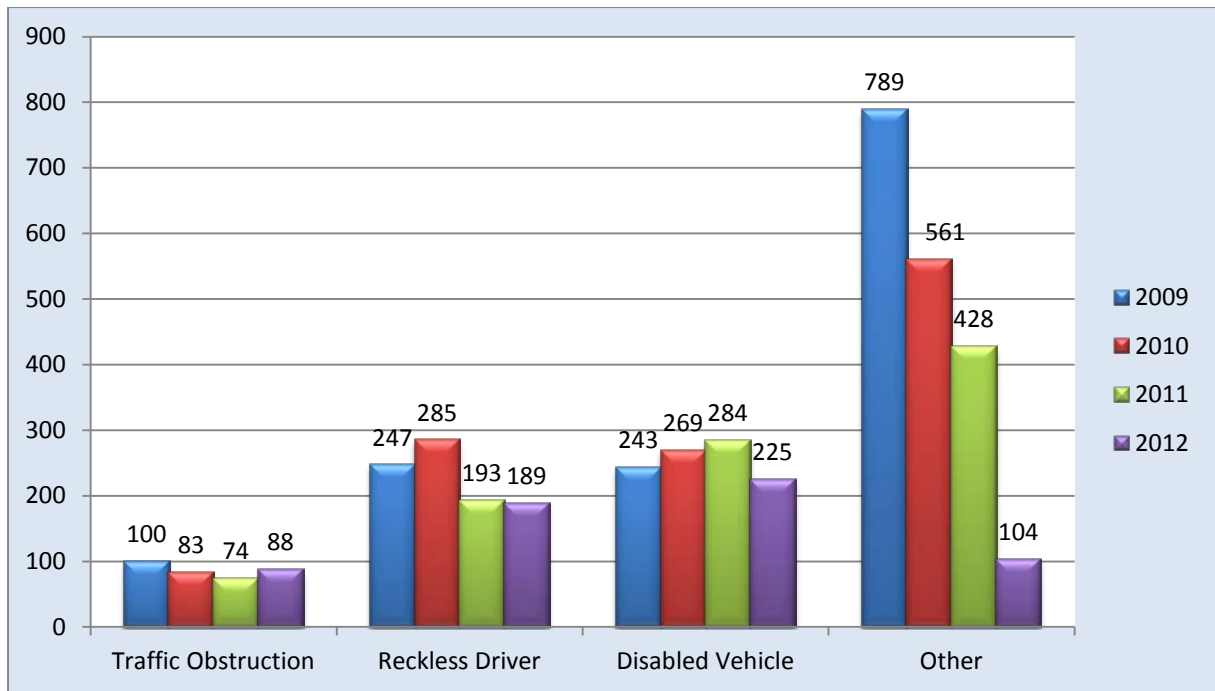
Non-crash traffic-related calls-for-service

Analyzing traffic-related data and calls-for-service that do not involve motor vehicle crashes, but require the allocation of agency resources is important in the overall assesment of equipment need and personnel allocation to a particular problem area. Below is an annual comparison of that data.

² Population figures are for the incorporated municipality of Punta Gorda only and are based on data provided by the US Census Bureau and the Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, the same database utilized by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for Uniform Crime Reporting purposes.

³ Traffic count data provided by the City of Punta Gorda Public Works Department.





The other category listed in the above graph includes abandoned vehicles...

Roadway Crashes

According to the [Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles](#), traffic crash fatalities on Florida roadways decreased between 2009 and 2010 by 4.6% going from 2,563 to 2,444 respectively. The 2012 crash statistics show a positive trend in decreases in fatalities on our roadways and in some instances to historic lows. The following information was also released as part of their [Traffic Crash Statistics Report 2011](#).

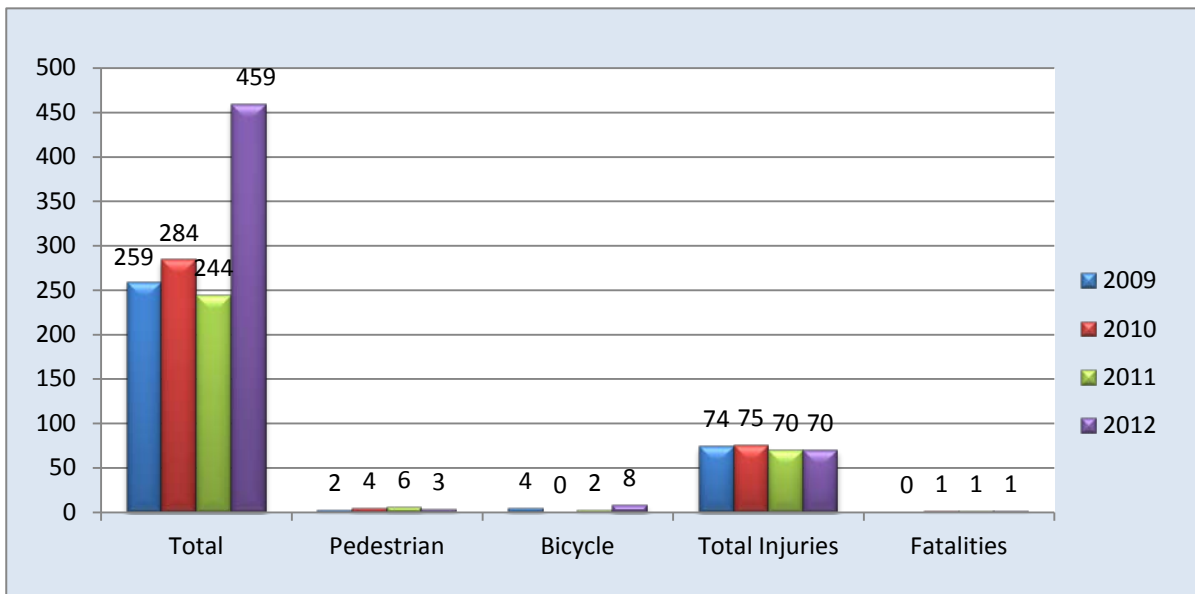
Statewide Data

- Fatalities as a result of traffic crashes on Florida roadways decreased between 2010 and 2011 by almost 2% going from 2,444 to 2,400 respectively.
- Over the past six years, fatalities have dropped every year from 2005 with 3,533 to 2011 with 2,400, which is a 32% reduction.
- State Mileage Death Rate (the number of deaths per 100 million miles traveled) is 1.25 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 2011, which is the same as last year and is the lowest since the rate has been calculated.
- Motorcyclist and passenger fatalities increased between 2010 and 2011 by approximately 18% from 383 to 451 respectively.
- Bicyclist fatalities increased between 2010 and 2011 by almost 58% from 76 to 120 respectively.
- Fatalities of teen drivers and passengers increased between 2010 and 2011 by 7% from 144 to 154 respectively.



When analyzing local crash data, numerous areas are examined to include overall number of crashes, number of crashes at particular intersections, number and severity of injuries, amount of property damage, time of day, weather conditions, and many causal factors. This data is analyzed on a quarterly basis and distributed to our uniformed personnel.

Although important, for the purposes of this plan parking lot crashes were removed from the below statistical data. The avoidance of parking lot crashes is an engineering and design issue and is not significantly impacted by enforcement efforts.



A Historical View of Fatal Crashes in the City of Punta Gorda

Since 1964, there have been thirty vehicle-related deaths in the City of Punta Gorda. Six of those deceased were pedestrians, three of which were found at fault for the crash. Seven of the crashes were documented to have alcohol as the cause or a factor in the collision. As this document will focus on 5-year statistical studies of the City’s traffic trends, it should be noted that since 2007 there have only been three fatal crashes, involving a single motorcycle cited for careless driving, a vehicle cited for failure to yield right of way, and also a pedestrian cited for failing to yield the right of way to a vehicle. We had one traffic-related fatality in 2012. One vehicle crash – driver was operating a motor scooter, no helmet, no drugs or alcohol involved.

Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol and/or Drugs

According to [Florida State Statute 316.193](#), a person is guilty of driving under the influence, when they are under the influence of alcohol or any [chemical substance outlined in Florida State Statute 877.111](#), to the extent that the person’s normal faculties are impaired. There

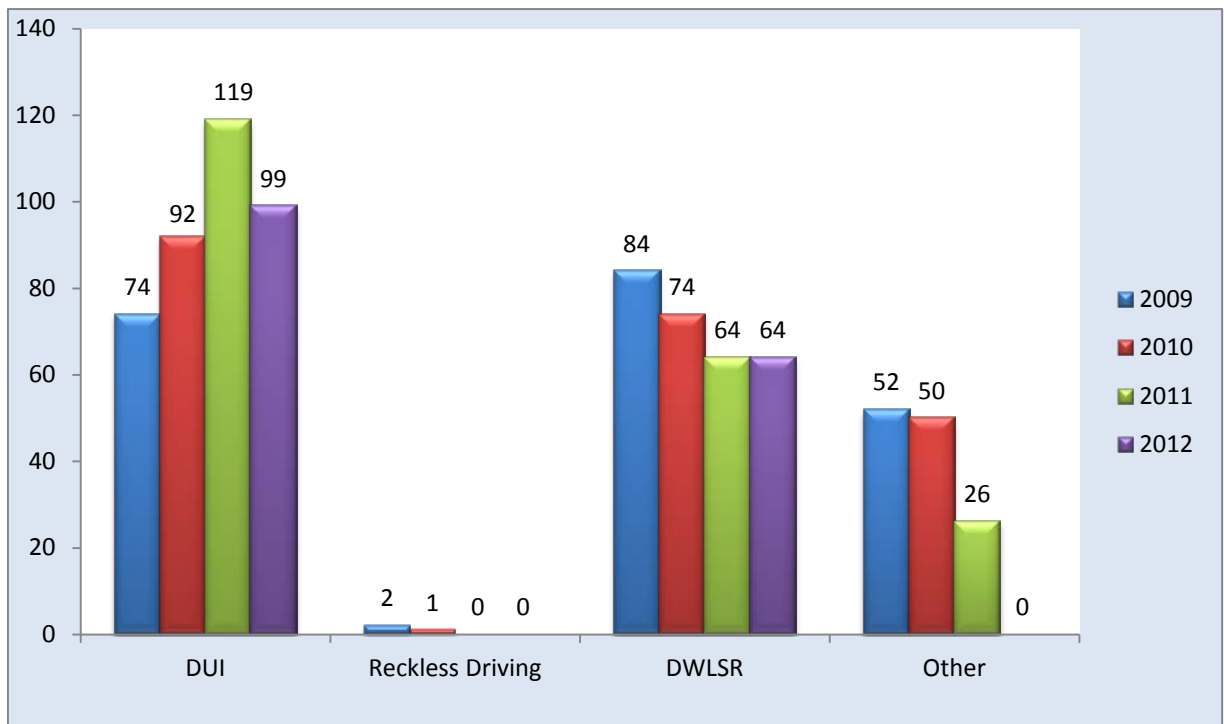


is a legal presumption of impairment when a person’s blood-alcohol or breath-alcohol level is a 0.08 or higher.

The Punta Gorda Police Department takes a very aggressive and proactive approach toward the enforcement of criminal activity and apprehension of criminals. As it relates to traffic-related crimes, of particular note is Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol and/or Drugs. According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#), alcohol-impaired motor vehicle crashes cost more than an estimated \$37 billion annually. In 2010, more than 10,000 people died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes—one every 51 minutes. Problem drinkers have twice as many injury events per year and four times as many hospitalizations for injuries.

The Punta Gorda Police Department does not perform roadside sobriety checkpoints. Although they can be a deterrent to Driving Under the Influence, it is the department’s belief that these manpower-intensive checkpoints prove to inconvenience law-abiding citizens and are a less cost-effective way to protecting our roadways.

As noted in the below chart, three of the past four years have seen an increase in DUI arrests. Penalties for Driving Under the Influence in the State of Florida are severe to include jail time, probation, loss of driving privilege, attendance at DUI school, attorney fees, fines, court costs, and more. More information regarding penalties can be viewed at <http://www.flhsmv.gov/ddl/dlfaqson2.html>



“Other” arrests include but are not limited to: - No Insurance, No Registration, Attaching Tag Not Assigned, etc.



Drug Recognition Expert Program

A drug recognition expert or drug recognition evaluator (DRE) is a police officer trained to recognize impairment in drivers under the influence of drugs other than, or in addition to, alcohol. The Punta Gorda Police Department implemented a DRE program on June 27, 2008. [The International Association of Chiefs of Police \(IACP\)](#) coordinates the [International Drug Evaluation and Classification \(DEC\) Program](#) with support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Currently, the Punta Gorda Police Department has one DRE, Corporal Dylan Renz. Without a DRE, the only evidence of drug impairment is contained in the suspect's blood or urine. Due to the fact that the evidence of drug use can last for weeks in blood or urine, a DRE's testimony is needed to confirm that the suspect was impaired at the time of the evaluation. DRE's can determine, with a high degree of accuracy, the category or categories of drugs causing the impairment or if the impairment is caused by a medical condition. The DRE conducts the Drug Influence Examination on the subject in the nationally standardized and systematic [twelve-step process](#) to reach his/her opinion.

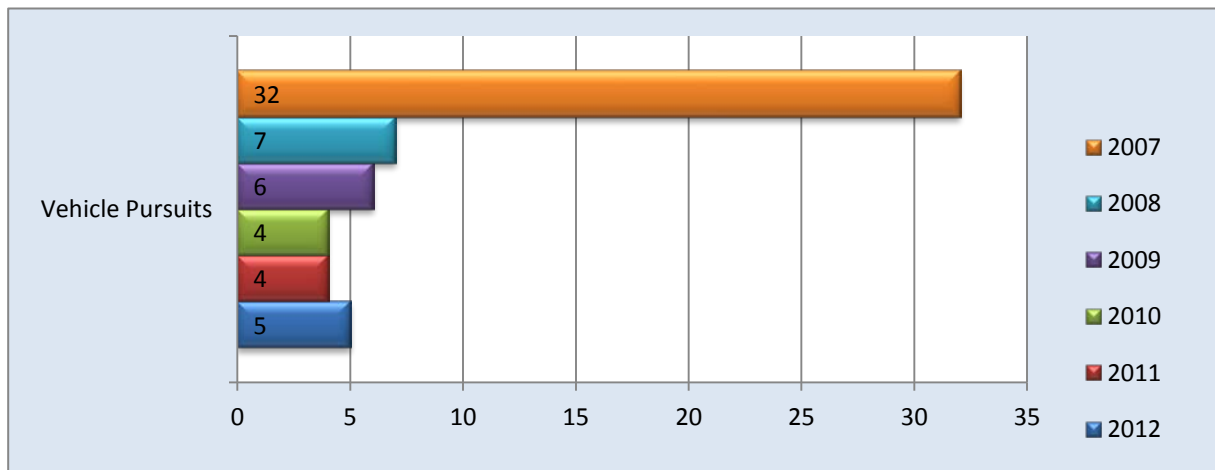
Vehicle Pursuits

A vehicle pursuit is an active attempt by an officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend the occupant(s) of another vehicle. However, the driver of the vehicle must be aware of the attempt and willfully flee in an attempt to elude.

It is the current policy of the Punta Gorda Police Department to authorize the pursuit of vehicles when the occupants are suspected of being involved in any felony, violent misdemeanor (as defined in policy), or suspected DUI. Individual circumstances dictate the course of action to be taken. Good judgment and common sense are the guiding factor when making the decision to pursue.

There are many safety factors that must be considered before making the decision to pursue a vehicle, to include the type of fleeing vehicle (sport utility vehicle, motorcycle, Semi-trailer, etc. have increased risk factors) speed of the fleeing vehicle, volume of traffic on the roadway and roadway type (gravel, paved, etc.), weather conditions, visibility, as well as approaching school zones, and many more. This and other information is considered by the officer prior to and during any vehicle pursuit. The on-duty shift supervisor directly monitors all pursuits and is authorized to terminate the pursuit at any time. As you can see in the below chart, the Punta Gorda Police Department was involved in a total of 58 vehicle pursuits in the past six years, to include pursuits initiated by another law enforcement agency. Every pursuit is also reviewed by Command Staff to ensure proper procedures were followed throughout the event.





Note: Police pursuits are one of the most high-liability areas of any law enforcement agency. Great caution toward public safety risks is exercised when developing and evaluating pursuit policies. The differences in the above annual statistics can be attributed to ever-evolving policies based on crime trends, new information and case law, and policing philosophies.

To increase citizen and officer safety during the pursuit, each uniform patrol officer is trained in the Precision Immobilization Technique (PIT) maneuver. The PIT maneuver is a technique used to immobilize the suspect vehicle by which a pursuing vehicle can force a fleeing vehicle to abruptly turn sideways, causing the driver to lose control and stop, thus bringing a conclusion to the pursuit.



The decision to implement this intervention technique during a vehicle pursuit requires the involved officers to take into account the totality of circumstances and variables associated with this maneuver, as well as the on-duty supervisor's approval.

To minimize damage to the patrol vehicle when completing a PIT maneuver, new patrol vehicles ordered each year are equipped with a [Setina Wrap Around Push Bumper](#), allowing the department to transition to a fleet of vehicles all equipped with push bumpers.

At least one patrol vehicle on duty is also equipped with a Stop Stick brand tire deflation device. In early 2009, the Punta Gorda Police Department transitioned to these devices with grant funding at no cost to the citizens of Punta Gorda. Prior to that date, the police department was utilizing a similar product known as Road Spikes. Road Spikes required the officer to remain within approximately 10 feet from the spikes to manually raise the spikes. This put the officer in the direct path of the violator. Numerous officers have been killed or seriously injured by





violators, either intentionally or when trying to avoid the spikes. As Stop Sticks can be thrown and retrieved from a safe location, the department replaced the Road Spikes in the interest of officer’s safety.

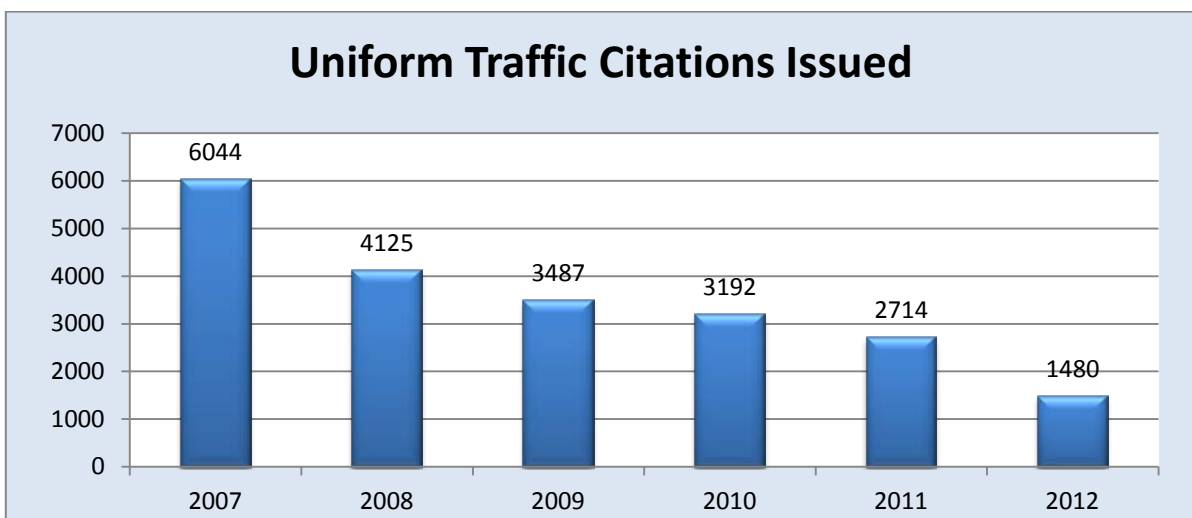
When the suspect vehicle drives across the Stop Stick device, the quills allow for a slow and controlled release of air from the suspect vehicle tires. The slow release allows the suspected violator to more easily control the vehicle as it comes to a stop. More information about Stop Sticks can be found at <http://www.stopstick.com/>.

Citations and Warnings

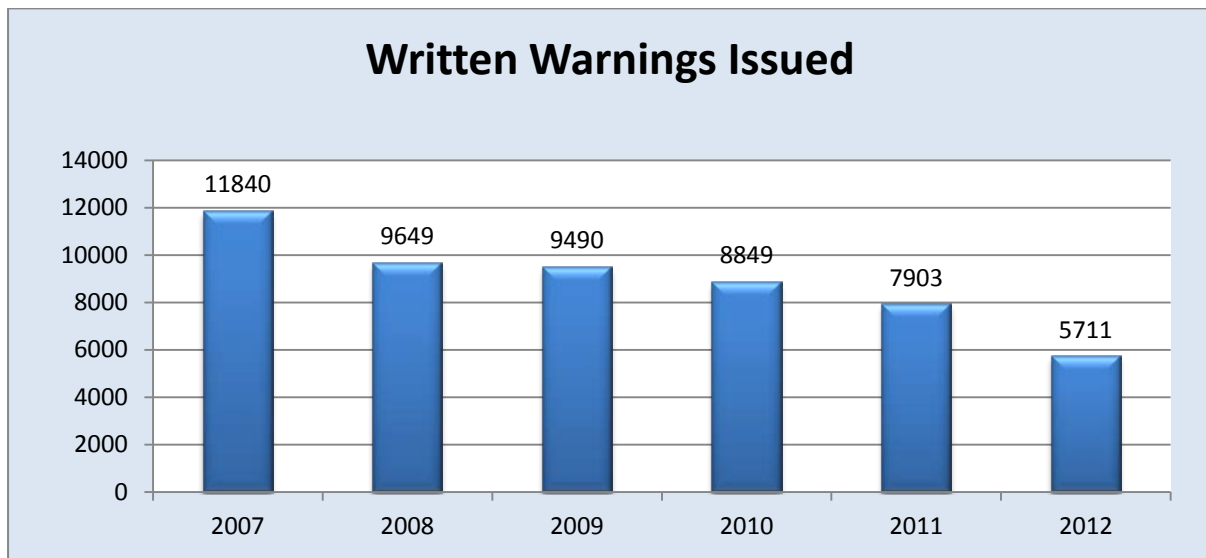
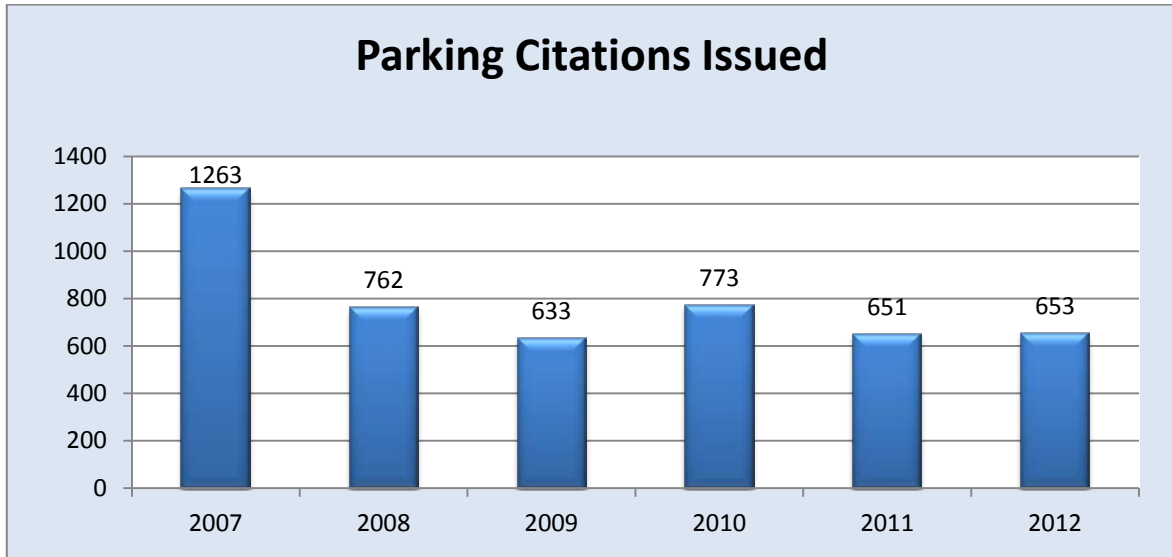
With the mission of saving lives, preventing injuries, and reducing economic costs associated with motor vehicle crashes, officers use citations and warnings in an effort to gain voluntary citizen compliance with the law and to educate the public with a level of accountability. With a customer-centric focus, officers are provided discretion on the course of action chosen. Many factors are considered by the officer when making that decision, including the type and severity of the infraction and prior warnings issued. In the following charts, the comparison of the number of citations issued to the number of warnings issued is noted.

The Punta Gorda Police Department recognizes that there is an economic impact to a traffic violator when he/she is issued a citation. In these hard economic times, all circumstances are considered prior to making the decision to issue a citation. The below chart illustrates a three-year reduction in the number of citations that are being issued to traffic violators. Under no circumstances is this a reduction in our enforcement efforts/activity.

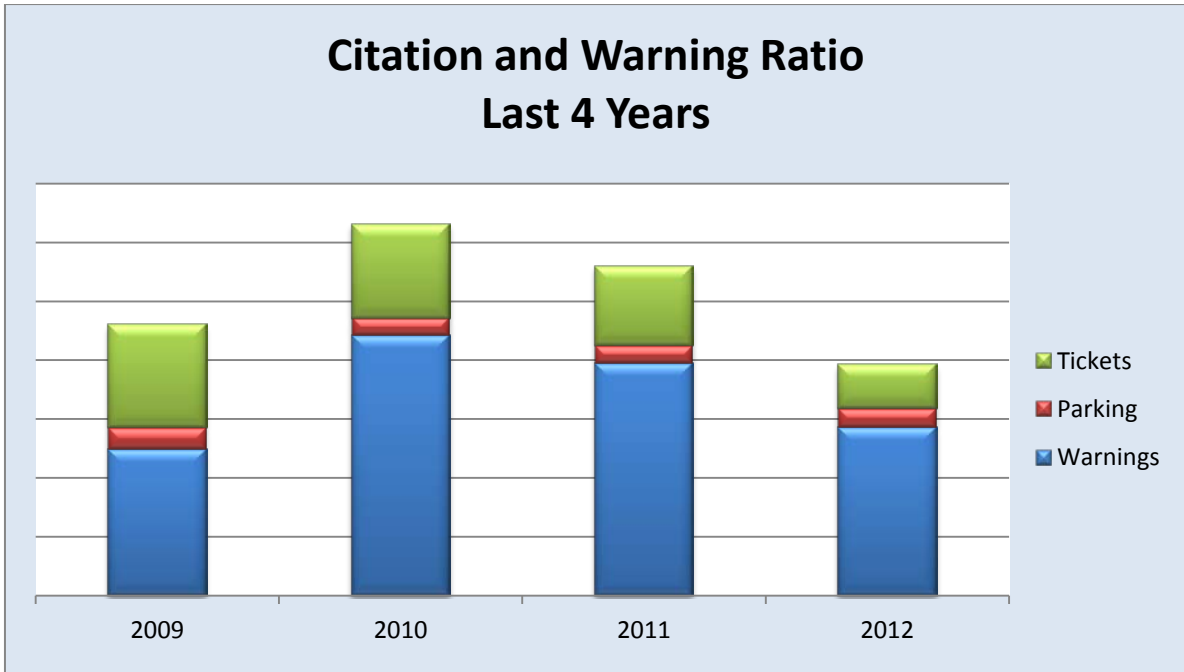
Police management tracks the number of citations and warnings issued by each individual officer and police volunteer. While there are no quotas of citations or warnings that an officer must fill, tracking these numbers allows for studies on trends of violations for certain times, days, and areas. Supervisors also attend traffic court to observe officers testify to ensure that quality service is provided in all aspects of the process.



The above chart illustrates the continuing decrease in the number of citations that are being issued. As the economy downturned and traffic fine costs continue to be increased by the Florida Legislature, officers have taken a customer-centric approach to addressing traffic violations. Education and written warnings are options in lieu of the monetary penalty associated with a citation.



Over the above six year period, officers have written far more warnings than tickets and remained consistent in their application of their aforementioned discretion. Educating citizens with a warning is in many cases the best solution to a traffic-related incident, builds relationships, and will serve to gain voluntary compliance in the future. The tracking software in OSSI also assists in tracking the number of warnings a citizen has received when and for what offenses.



Current Fine Amounts

Traffic citation fine amounts are not set by the police department and vary from county to county. Below are some examples of traffic citation fine amounts in Charlotte County, Florida.

TYPE OF VIOLATION	FINE AMOUNT
Bicycle and Pedestrian Violations	\$59.50
Non-Moving Violations	\$111.00
Moving Violations	\$161.00
Littering	\$105.00
Speeding – 6 to 9 MPH	\$126.00
Speeding – 20-29 MPH	\$276.00
Speeding 20-29 MPH in a School Zone	\$451.00
Speeding >30 MPH	Mandatory Court

To view the complete list of fines in Charlotte County, you can click on the following link: <http://www.co.charlotte.fl.us/getfiles/traffinechart.pdf>. Many factors can have an impact on the fine amount, such as electing to attend school and assessed court fees. In cases that require a mandatory court appearance, the Judge will set the fine in court.

Unlike the above mentioned traffic violations, parking violations in the City of Punta Gorda are enforced through the [City of Punta Gorda Code of Ordinances](#). These fines are set and modified as needed by the [City Council](#). Below are examples of parking violation fine amounts.



TYPE OF VIOLATION	FINE AMOUNT
Handicap Parking Violation	\$100.00
Fire Lane Violations	\$100.00
Most Other Parking Violations	\$25.00

The amount of the fine is also impacted by the number of entities that lobby the legislature for a portion or what is commonly referred to as an add-on. Below is an example of fee disbursements on a single speeding ticket.

Example of Fee Disbursement on a Typical Speeding Citation ⁴			
Additional Court Costs	\$2.78	Brain & Spinal Cord	\$4.47
Court Costs Admin Fee	\$12.50	Juvenile Justice	\$1.00
Additional Court Costs	\$0.27	Local Law Enf. Education	\$2.00
General Revenue Fund	\$11.23	Court Related OPS	\$10.00
Traffic Court Costs	\$5.00	Game & Fish Conservation	\$3.00
Traffic Criminal Justice	\$2.50	Radio Communication Program	\$12.50
Court Facilities	\$30.00	Radio Systems Surcharge	\$3.00
Court Costs-Traffic	\$30.00	Student Driver Education	\$3.00
Department of Revenue	\$3.00	Public Defender Fund	\$1.67
EMS	\$3.92	State Attorney Fund	\$3.33
Civil Traffic Fines	\$30.74	State Revocable Trust Fund	\$5.00
FL Endowment Foundation	\$1.09	Child Welfare	\$1.00

⁴ Data provided by the Charlotte County Clerk of the Court, Traffic Division





Section 3 – Available Resources

Personnel

Dispatch/Telecommunicators

The Punta Gorda Police Department employs 8 full-time telecommunicators and 1 Supervisor. Each telecommunicator is state certified, Emergency Medical Dispatch certified, and holds certifications through Florida Department of Law Enforcement allowing them access to the drivers’ license and criminal history database.

Traffic-related concerns or vehicle crashes can be reported to the dispatch center at (941) 639-4111. Telecommunicators will professionally take the information and relay it to the appropriate law enforcement, fire, EMS, and/or other resource to effectively and efficiently handle the situation. Once the officer is dispatched to the incident location, telecommunicators act as the safety and information center for the on-scene officers.

Uniform Patrol Section

The Uniform Patrol Section is divided into four main squads of officers that are staffed with 4 officers and 1 Lieutenant/Watch Commander each. The minimum staffing requirement for a shift is 3 uniform officers and one supervisor. This allows for officer vacation, sick time, training, and any medical leave. The primary function of the Uniform Patrol Section is the protection of life and property. To that end, officers practice high visibility patrol traffic enforcement as a deterrent to violations with an emphasis on the reduction of traffic crashes. In areas that are identified as requiring directed traffic enforcement, such as speed zones or higher-crash intersections, officers utilize stationary observation as well as other techniques for enforcement and or education efforts outlined in this plan.

Reserve Unit

The Police Reserve Unit is comprised of fully-certified law enforcement officers who are required to serve a minimum of twenty (20) volunteer hours each month. Trained reserve officers are also used to cover patrol shifts to achieve minimum staffing at an hourly rate far less than the average overtime rate of pay, resulting in a substantial savings for city residents. Aside from supplementing the normal duties of a patrol officer, Reserve officers also assist in traffic enforcement for parades and events, holiday DUI enforcement, and are available for traffic-related incidents that will require long-term staffing needs.

Below is a breakdown of volunteer hours provided in 2012:

Administrative Hours	Patrol Hours	Event-Related Hours
1241	202	32



Specialty Units

Specialty units within the Uniform Patrol Section are comprised of uniform patrol officers who volunteer for specialty training a discipline that compliments their function as a patrol officer. Officers who participate in these Units receive special training, noted in their respective paragraphs, and in addition to special patrols in their specialty units still work regular shifts with their assigned road patrol squads.

Motor Unit

The Punta Gorda Police Department currently utilizes two (2) 2010 Harley-Davidson Electra Glide (Police Model) motors, with at least two motor officers trained to ride, and do so based on their work schedule.



The purpose of the department's motor unit is to provide an additional service delivery channel that includes targeting areas of high volume traffic accidents, citizen complaints of traffic violations (speeding, red light running, etc.), as well as answering calls for service, escorts, parades, static displays and public relations.

Motor officers must complete 80 hours of training and pass a skills test before being granted the title of Motor Officer and receive the coveted "wing & wheel" which is the traditional insignia worn by motor officers. Annual refresher training is also required to maintain a safe skill set.

Bicycle Patrol Unit

The bicycle unit consists of (5) five sworn police officers who are also assigned to squads, and carry their bicycles on their respective patrol vehicles. The bicycle unit is a support function of the police department's Uniform Patrol Section. Officers assigned to the unit are required to complete a comprehensive training program prior to being deployed as well as recurring training. Officers are required to ride a minimum of (8) eight patrol hours per month. Bike Team members ride throughout the city on patrol, conducting traffic enforcement, business and other commercial property checks, community policing, and educating the public about bicycle safety.





Below is a chart reflecting the amount of hours bicycle officers conducted patrols on their bicycles rather than their patrol cars.

FY 2009/2010												
Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Total
64	12	58	12	8	7	23	8	18	10	10	8	238
FY 2010/2011												
Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Total
8	14	16	10	12	24	32	16	22	22	16	18	210
FY 2011/2012												
Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Total
19	12.5	26	18	16	26	16	4	4	4	0	8	153.5

In past years, the bicycle unit has been credited with numerous arrests, to include narcotics, impaired drivers, and the apprehension of a carjacking and robbery suspect. The bicycle team is a highly motivated group of officers dedicated to the enhancement of Punta Gorda and the safety of our youth and adult cyclists.

Traffic Homicide Investigators

Traffic Homicide Investigators (THI) are Uniform Patrol Officers who excel in the technical aspects of crash investigations and have specialized training that goes far beyond standard accident investigation. This training coupled with specific equipment assists them to conduct an investigation of a crash involving a fatality and to properly process it as a crime scene. Traffic Homicide training involves a three-phase program; each phase being a separate 80 hour course.

Although they may not be the first responder to a traffic-related fatality, they will be called upon to take over the investigation at an early stage and see it through to its conclusion.

There are three members of the Punta Gorda Police Department’s Traffic Homicide Investigator Team. They respond to an average three vehicle crashes per year that involve a fatality or serious bodily injury that has a potential to result in a fatality.

Community Services Section

The Community Services Section of the Punta Gorda Police Department is responsible for educating the general public in regard to bicycle and pedestrian safety. This is completed through several different avenues. The Community Services Section distributes safety information and/or legal updates in regard to traffic-related issues through email “Neighborhood Watch Alerts.” These alerts reach an estimated 2,500 customers within the City of Punta Gorda. Citizens who would like to receive these alerts can contact our Community Services Section at (941) 575-5525.

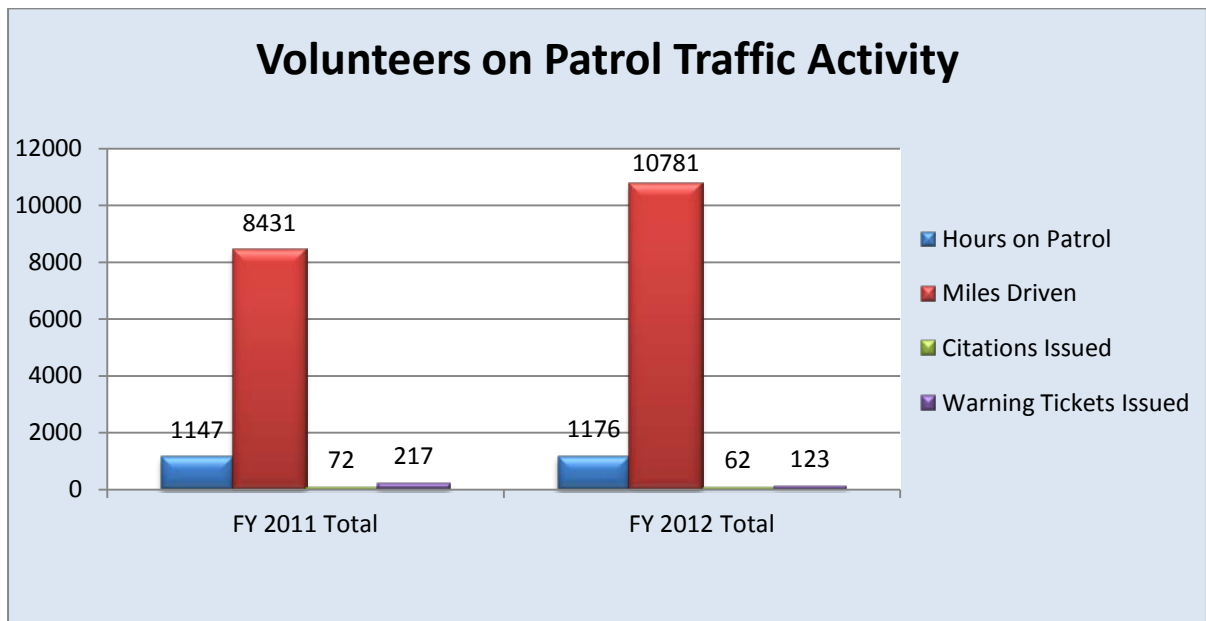


In addition, the Community Services Section hosts approximately 3 bicycle rodeos throughout the year. Bicycle rodeos are designed to instruct children on the “rules of the road” while operating a bicycle. Furthermore, bicycle safety material is distributed at many of the events the Community Services Section attends and/or hosts.

Community Services officers conduct numerous speeches throughout the community during the year. Traffic-related issues or concerns are frequently addressed during these meetings. This provides an additional avenue for the citizens to relay any concerns.

Volunteer Services

The Volunteers On Patrol (VOP) program is designed to give the City greater police visibility by having local residents volunteer their time and talent. They act as additional eyes and ears for our patrol officers. The VOPs conduct directed patrols (DP) at approximately 15 different locations within the City, including the three City parks; Gilchrist Park, Lashley Park, and Ponce De Leon Park. While patrolling these areas, they answer questions for the public, and provide assistance whenever necessary for local residents. The Volunteers on Patrol check for parking violations in handicap parking spaces, fire lane violators, and ensure compliance of other City parking ordinances. The volunteer can either issue a parking citation or a courtesy warning when a vehicle is not in compliance with City Codes.



Also all VOPs and Traffic Volunteers assist with various traffic situations to ensure the safety of pedestrians and motorists including:

- Traffic control at intersections for several City parades and City events; Christmas Parades, 4th of July event, Veteran's Day Parade, Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade, Charlotte High School Homecoming Parade, etc.;
- Traffic control at intersections for special events, such as the Alzheimer's Association Walk, the 5K Jingle Bell Run/Walk;





- Assist in directing traffic with disabled vehicles and crash sites; and
- Provide escorts

The Volunteers use a patrol car with the marking "Volunteers on Patrol" on the sides of the vehicle. This vehicle also acts as a visual deterrent to traffic violations, providing similar to the un-manned decoy car, without requiring a uniform patrol officer's presence. There are approximately 30 VOP and Traffic Volunteer members currently in the program. The VOPs are available all year long and conduct patrols each day of the month at a minimal cost to the taxpayer.



Section 4 – Equipment Overview

Technology

Each Punta Gorda Police Department marked vehicle is equipped with a laptop computer which officers utilize during patrols. Each officer is Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) certified to search the [Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle](#) (DHSMV) database and the [Florida Department of Law Enforcement](#) (FDLE) database. These consist of records/files, driver's licenses, vehicle registrations, criminal histories, warrants, etc. Each laptop has access to the Driver and Vehicle Information Database (DAVID), through DHSMV. DAVID allows officers to pull up driver's license photos so they



can verify identification. They can also view driving histories, vehicle and insurance information, signature arrays and previous driver license photos. Each laptop has a card swipe which officers use to bring up driver's license information via the magnetic strip on the back of the driver's license. This information is then stored on the laptop and, with the quick push of a button, that information is transferred to a traffic citation or warning. Each patrol vehicle is also set up with an in-car printer. Uniform traffic citations, written warnings and trespass warnings are all printed in the patrol cars. All information entered into the laptop is stored in the OSSI RMS system which is the records keeping system for the agency. The laptops are set up through OSSI so that officers can complete their reports in their patrol cars. This frees the officers from having to be in the station to complete their reports. The reports go directly to the Records Section upon being approved by the supervisors making report recording nearly paperless.

Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) Monitors

The ATMS project began back in 1998 and was funded through the [Federal Highway Administration](#) and [Florida Department of Transportation](#). There was an emphasis at that time to bring state and federal highways up to standards and both US 41 and State Road (SR) 776 were candidates. In an attempt to save time and money, an effort was made to integrate this update with the existing traffic lighting hardware already in place.

In August, 2004 Hurricane Charley changed all the plans. Because of the significant storm damage, there wasn't a working signal to be found on US 41 from the Myakka River south to the Lee County line. Since that time, all new hardware was ordered and installed over the next few years and the Traffic Management Center was established. In addition, 40 incident management cameras have been installed and allow the lighting staff to monitor traffic flow. Staff can use this information to modify signal timing, notify the proper authorities in case of accidents or incidents, and assist the public to get the best possible response with the least inconvenience. This program is not managed by the Police Department, but the information is available to law enforcement. According to the Charlotte County Community Development Lighting District:

- ✓ 39 cameras have been strategically located to monitor traffic throughout Charlotte County. Five of those cameras are specifically within the City limits of Punta Gorda.
- ✓ Fiber optic network connecting 17 intersections within the City. Currently +/- 98 out of 106 intersections throughout the County connected.
- ✓ Monitoring of cameras and operations of traffic controllers done daily, from the Traffic Management Center. The Punta Gorda Police Department can monitor City intersections in their Communication Center.
- ✓ FDOT has provided timing plans for coordination to move traffic more efficiently and safely throughout the City and County within the past year. This is a continuing process for monitoring traffic due to changing patterns (i.e. seasonal, vs. non-seasonal).

Speed Measurement Technology

The department utilizes both Radar and Laser speed detection devices of the following brands;



Laser Unit

- [Kustom Signals](#) Pro Laser III
- Kustom Signals Pro 1000DS
- Kustom Signals Raptor RP-1
- [Decatur Electronics](#) Genesis II
- Kustom Signals HR12
(Handheld)



Radar Unit

Each unit must be calibrated every six months to remain in-service pursuant to Florida Administrative Code. Officers must complete a 40 hour Laser/Speed Measurement certification course before use or issuance. The benefit of having a speed detection device is it allows officers to immediately address speeding infractions and take appropriate action. The handheld radar and laser units assist officers with enforcing speed infractions where placement of a vehicle is not practical. Speed enforcement devices are a vital tool in keeping the motoring, and pedestrian public safe from speeding drivers.

In-Car Video Cameras

Each Punta Gorda Police Department marked road patrol vehicle is equipped with a Digital Ally in-car video camera system. This unique system utilizes the rear view mirror as its monitor and audio/video storage drive. Each video camera is digital and operates on a compact flash (CF) card for storage. Each camera has GPS mark capability, pre-event



recording, wireless microphones, and each vehicle is equipped with a second rear seat camera. This technology has proven its worth as it captured daily emergency operations of officers and has produced useable evidence for use in court proceedings. At the end of an officer's shift, the video is downloaded and stored for months. Long range planning discussions have surrounded a transition to a wireless uploading feature. More information on these video systems can be found at <http://www.digitalallyinc.com>.

Radar Speed Display Trailer

The police department utilizes a radar speed display trailer in areas where an increased number of speed limit violators has been identified. This can be through reports from citizens or observations of officers during daily patrol. The trailer is moved frequently throughout the City of Punta Gorda to ensure drivers are aware of speed limits and reminded to drive safely.

The police department has one radar speed display trailer. In 2011, it was deployed at 46 locations throughout the City. The purchase of this radar speed display trailer was made possible through a Florida Motor Unit Challenge award - no cost to Punta Gorda residents.



Traffic enforcement requests as well as suggestions for the location of the radar speed display trailer can be directed to the Punta Gorda Police Department Operations Commander at (941) 575-5539 or email a request at http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/depts/police/police_traffic.html.

Portable Breath Test Devices

The police department utilizes the [Alco-Sensor III Portable Breath Test \(PBT\)](#) as a tool to determine if an underage person is under the influence of alcohol. This small portable machine is required to be checked and calibrated annually. State law does not allow the use of these machines in impaired driving investigations, but when an officer believes a person under the age of 21 has consumed alcohol but is not impaired beyond their normal faculties, this test can be used. This is considered an administrative test. If a person under 21 is determined to have a level higher than a .02, they can and will have their driving privilege suspended.



Officers use these devices on a regular basis on patrol as an invaluable tool in combating under age consumption. Officers have also used these devices to assist the County and State Probation Departments in confirming probationers are not using alcohol.



Officers complete in-house training on the use and application of the Alco-Sensor III Portable Breath Test device while completing their initial Field Training Program.

Tint Meters

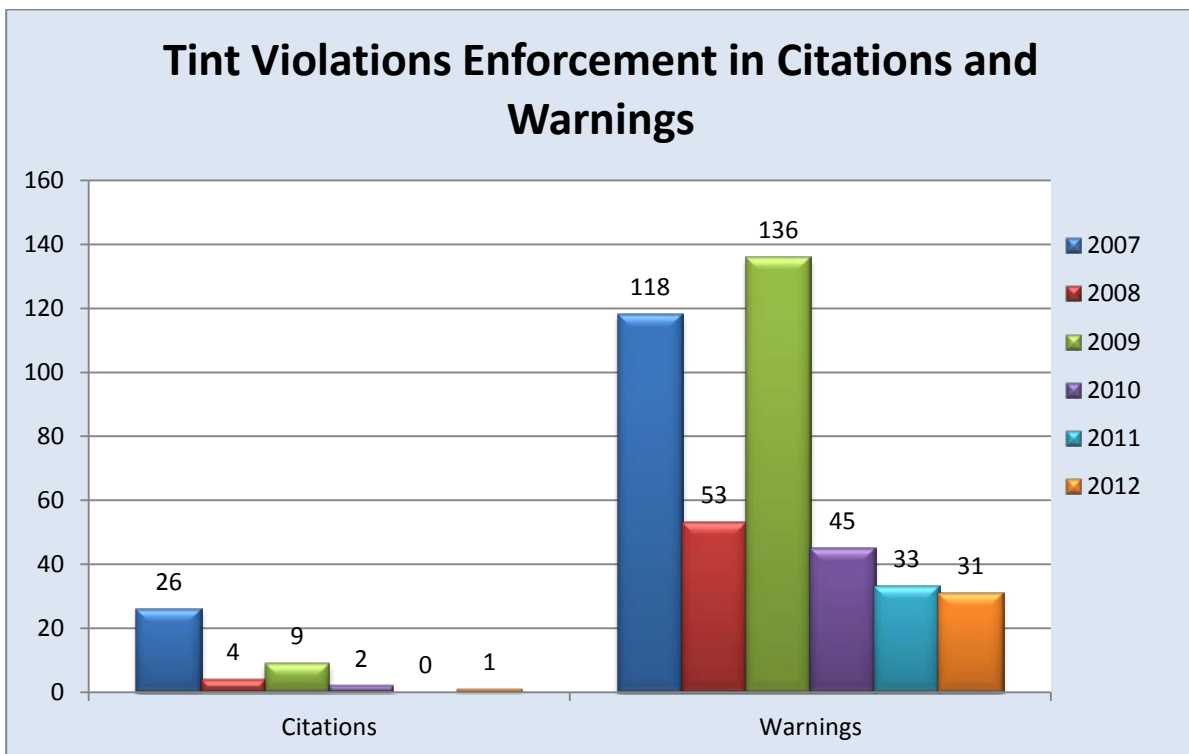
The police department has two [Pocket Detective 2.1 Tint Meters](#) which are required to be calibrated semi-annually.

In decreased lighting conditions, excessive window tint drastically reduces the officer’s visibility into a vehicle, as well as impairs the driver’s vision of the roadway. Dark tint creates a hazard as officers approach a vehicle to contact the occupants.



[Florida State Statute 316.2953](#) addresses how dark side window tint may be. It states in part:

- You may not have non-transparent tint often referred to as “limo tint”. Darker tint permitted by the state for medical reasons requires a permit sticker on the inside passenger door frame indicating the exception.
- The tint material has to have a total solar reflectance of visible light of not more than 25 percent
- The tint material has to have a light transmittance of not less than 28 percent



As these restrictions can sound very technical to the average citizen, the Punta Gorda Police Department will take the time inspect vehicle tint to ensure that you are in compliance with



the law. If you would like to have your tint measured, you can contact the Punta Gorda Police Department at (941) 639-4111 and ask that an officer perform the test.

T3 Personal Mobility Vehicle

Punta Gorda Police Officers have a new energy-efficient, stealth-like vehicle to complement patrol vehicles, motorcycles, and bicycles. The Punta Gorda Police Department recently acquired a T3, which is a personal mobility vehicle designed to give officers greater vision in crowds, increase interaction with citizens, and improve mobility.

The T3 was paid for through a grant from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The vehicle runs on an electric motor, which also saves taxpayers on fuel costs.

The Punta Gorda Police Department uses the T3 to patrol the business district, Harbor Walk, Multi-Use Recreational Trails, parking lots, Herald Court Centre, as well as neighborhood streets.



Its maximum speed is 25 mph, but that doesn't mean officers can't conduct traffic stops. It is a street-legal vehicle for law enforcement. The T3 has been outfitted with the new Punta Gorda Police Department decals, which were designed by officers to increase nighttime visibility and reduce costs. It also has blue and red police lights as well as a siren.

Segway

The Segway was introduced at the police department on June 13, 2011 and is assigned to the School Resource Officer (SRO) at Charlotte High School. This new technology allows the SRO to travel this new sprawling campus much faster when responding to potential emergencies or other needs of the school.

The StreetSmart Full Conversion Fit was installed on the Segway on September 8, 2011. The StreetSmart package allows the Segway to be more effective when operated on the roadway, in the commercial districts, on the Harborwalk, and at City events and parades.

The police department has one certified Segway Instructor and several members trained to operate the device.



Section 5 – Department Policies

The Punta Gorda Police Department is an accredited law enforcement agency with Excelsior status⁵ through the [Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc.](#) Accreditation is the certification by an independent reviewing authority that the Punta Gorda Police Department has met specific requirements and prescribed standards, to include a wide-array of traffic-related policy standards as well as traffic safety and traffic enforcement standards. This peer-review system assures citizens that we are meeting the highest standard in law enforcement.

The police department Leadership Team reviews all standard operating procedures on a scheduled basis to ensure that all officers have access to current legislative updates and the most effective and efficient means of working with their community. Below is a list of traffic-specific policies that are maintained by the police department.

- ✓ 510.00 Traffic Enforcement
- ✓ 510.01 Traffic Stops
- ✓ 510.02 Traffic Direction and Control
- ✓ 510.04 Traffic Crash Investigations
- ✓ 510.05 DUI Detection and Enforcement
- ✓ 510.06 Speed Measuring Devices
- ✓ 510.07 Traffic Ancillary Services
- ✓ 510.08 Window Sunscreening Material; Enforcement
- ✓ 510.09 In-Vehicle Audio/Video Recording
- ✓ 511.00 Emergency Vehicle Operation/Pursuits

Bias-based Profiling

Biased-based profiling, formerly known as racial profiling, has been expanded to many other identifiable groups. It is the selection of an individual based solely on a trait common to a group for enforcement action. This includes but is not limited to: race, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, age, cultural group or any other identifiable group.

Bias-based profiling in law enforcement is totally unacceptable. The police department has a strict policy that provides guidelines for officers to prevent such occurrences, and to protect our officers from unwarranted accusations when they act within the dictates of the law and policy.

Motorists and pedestrians shall only be subjected to stops, seizures or detentions upon reasonable suspicion that they have committed, are committing, or are about to commit an infraction.

⁵ Excelsior status is granted to a law enforcement agency who has been re-accredited five times, without conditions, through the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc.

Section 6 – Other Common Traffic Safety Issues

Aggressive Driving

The Punta Gorda Police Department currently enforces aggressive driving, as defined in [Florida State Statute 316.1923](#). This aggressive driving law is enforceable when a violator commits two separately listed violations simultaneously; exceeding the posted speed, unsafely or improperly changing lanes, following another vehicle too closely, failing to yield to the right of way, improperly passing, and/or violating a traffic control or signal device.

[The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#) survey found that in 2009, 56% of deadly crashes involve one or more unsafe driving behaviors typically associated with aggressive driving, with speed being the most common. A phone survey also conducted by the AAA Foundation found that most of the participants described driving in ways (in the past 30 days) that could be deemed aggressive such as speeding on highways, tailgating, and disobeying traffic control devices.

Officers' abilities to locate such violators are important due to the increased risk of crashing and causing injuries. Should citizens witness aggressive driving behavior, it should be immediately reported to the police department.

Distracted Driving - Driving While Talking on a Cell Phone or Driving While Texting; New State Law

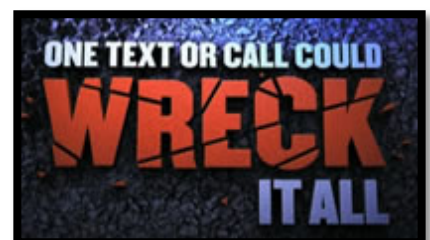
Distracted driving is any non-driving activity a person engages in that has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving and increases the risk of crashing.

The three main types of distractions are visual, manual, and cognitive; taking their eyes off the road, their hands off the wheel, or their mind off of what they are doing - driving.



There are many activities in which drivers are distracted including, cell phone use, eating, drinking, talking to passengers, grooming, and using navigational devices amongst many others. While all distractions pose a safety hazard, texting is extremely dangerous because it involves all three types of distraction together, visual, manual, and cognitive.

[National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA) reports that 20% of injury-related crashes in 2009 stemmed from distracted driving. Over 5,000 people were killed on United States highways and an additional 448,000 were injured in 2009 in which some form of distracted driving was the cause. The report showed cell phone usage was the distraction related to 995 of those deaths.





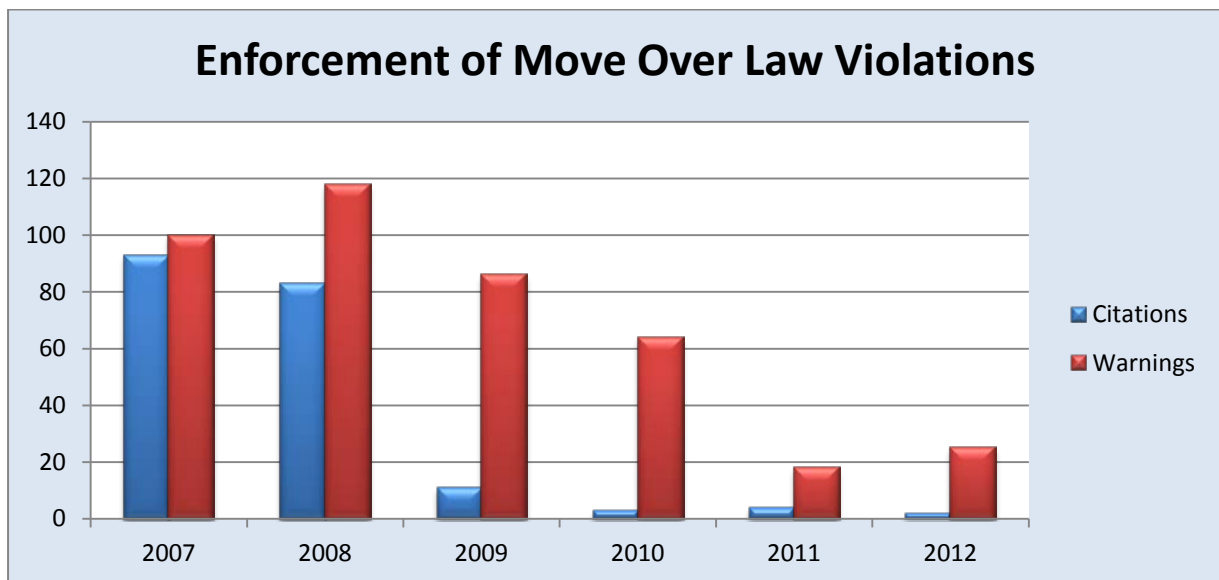
As of August 2010, Florida, Hawaii, and Ohio are the only states that do not prohibit the use of cell phones while driving a motor vehicle. Every other state in the country has some type of restrictions for cell phone use while driving.

CTIA – The Wireless Association®, an international nonprofit trade association representing the wireless communication industry reported as of December 2012, 171.3 billion text messages were sent in the US every month. Eleven percent of all drivers under the age of 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. Sending or receiving a text takes a driver’s eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds, the equivalent-at 55 mph-of driving the length of an entire football field, blind. <http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/facts-and-statistics.html>

As of October 1, 2013, texting while driving will be a secondary non-criminal traffic infraction. Senate Bill 52 amends F.S. 316.305. This bill provides assessment of points against the driver’s license for texting associated with various primary traffic infractions.

The Move Over Law

[The Move Over Law](#), which passed during the 2002 legislative session, requires all motorists approaching an emergency vehicle with lights flashing to change lanes away from the emergency vehicle if traveling on a multi-lane roadway and if able to do so safely. If a driver is unable to move over or is traveling on a single-lane roadway, the driver is required to slow to a speed that is 20 miles per hour less than the posted speed limit when the posted speed limit is 25 miles per hour or greater; or travel at five miles per hour when the posted speed limit is 20 miles per hour or less.



The Punta Gorda Police Department is dedicated to educating the public on the risk Public Safety personal face on a daily basis. This is an issue that has personally affected the Punta Gorda Police personnel due to the fact that the department lost one of its own in 1978 when Assistant Chief Richard Beecher was killed while searching for an escaped murderer. While conducting a search, Chief Beecher flagged down a truck and stepped-up on the running



board to speak to the driver. After questioning the driver, he stepped down off the running board and was struck by a passing motorist. Chief Beecher was transported to a local hospital where he died from his injuries a few hours later.

Punta Gorda Police Officers distribute literature on the Move Over Law during traffic-related encounters in an effort to gain voluntary compliance to this law.

6 Fallen Officers Struck by Vehicles														
1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	TOTAL
10	16	24	14	13	13	16	16	14	18	10	14	08	07	179

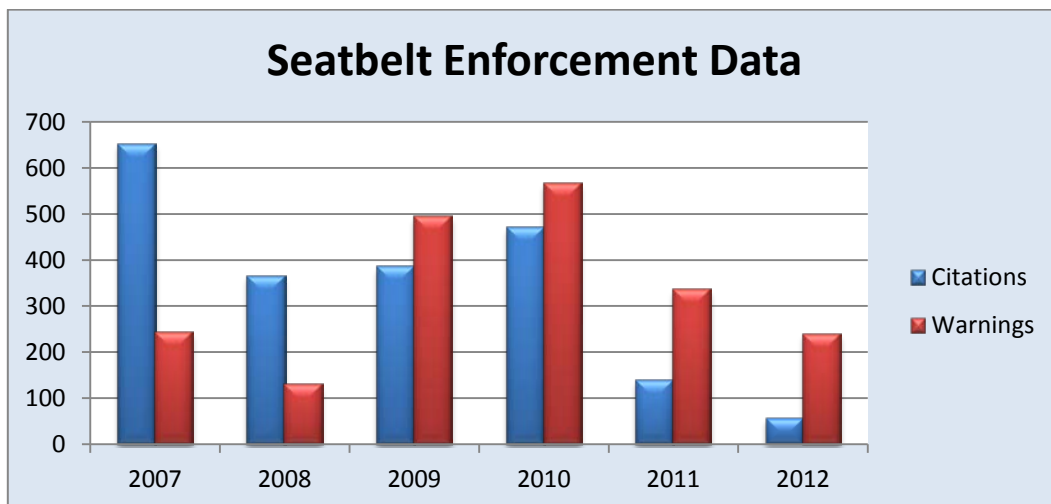
Seat Belt and Child Restraint Laws

In the State of Florida, it is required by law to wear a safety belt while operating a motor vehicle. In 2010, the Florida legislature passed a primary seat belt law that states that law enforcement officers can pull over motorists that fail to buckle up. The [safety belt usage law](#) outlines the following:



It is unlawful for any person:

- To operate a motor vehicle in this state unless each passenger and the operator of the vehicle under the age of 18 years are restrained by a safety belt or by a child restraint device; or
- To operate a motor vehicle in this state unless the person is restrained by a safety belt; and
- It is unlawful for any person 18 years of age or older to be a passenger in the front seat of a motor vehicle unless such person is restrained by a safety belt when the vehicle is in motion.



⁶ Statistical information on fallen officers struck by motor vehicles was obtained from the Florida Highway Patrol.



According to the [Florida Department of Transportation 2011 Seat Belt Use in Florida final report](#), the following state-wide statistics depict the increasing usage of safety belts in Florida.

2006: 80.7% **2007:** 79.1% **2008:** 81.7% **2012:** 87.4%
2009: 85.2% **2010:** 87.4% **2011:** 88.1%

Safety Belt Usage by Gender:

Gender	2009	2010	2011	2012
Female	89.3%	90.7%	91.2%	90.4%
Male	83.9%	84.2%	85.3%	85.0%

Seat belts save lives. According to the National Safety Council, seat belt use has been increasing and averages 88 percent nationally. The below chart displays statistics on crashes in which the use of restraint systems saved the occupants’ life.

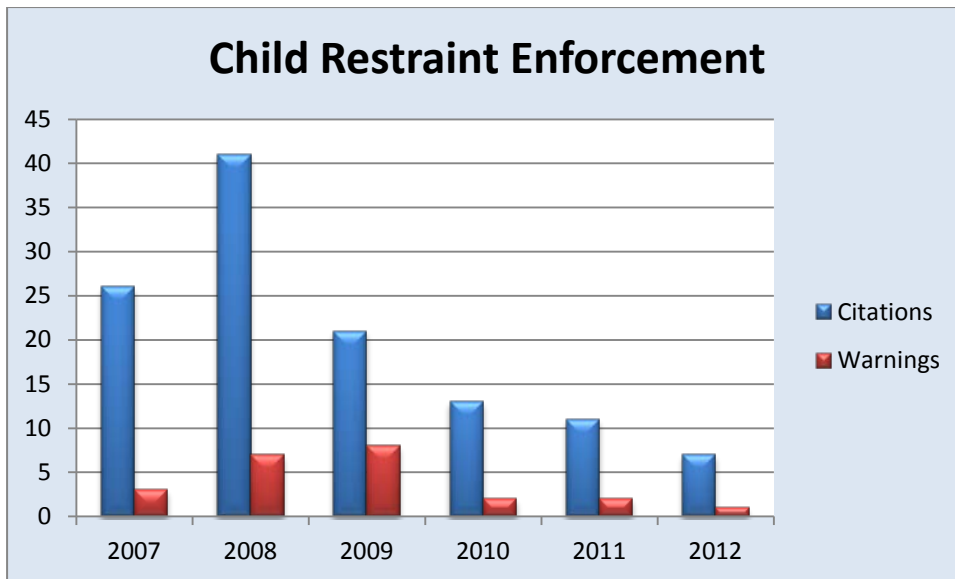
Year	Lives Saved Age <4	Lives Saved Age >5	Additional Lives That Would Have Been Saved with 100% Use
2004	455	15,548	5,874
2005	424	15,688	5,667
2006	427	15,458	5,468
2007	388	15,223	5,048
2008	244	13,250	4,152

Source: FARS 2004-2007 Final File, 2008 Annual Report File

With respect to [child restraint laws](#), the law states the following:

- Every operator of a motor vehicle, while transporting a child in a motor vehicle operated on the roadways, streets, or highways of this state, shall, if the child is 5 years of age or younger, provide for protection of the child by properly using a crash-tested, federally approved child restraint device.
- For children aged through 3 years, such restraint device must be a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer’s integrated child seat.
- For children aged 4 through 5 years, a separate carrier, an integrated child seat, or a seat belt may be used.





The National Highway Safety and Traffic Administration has launched the Parents Central Program. Information that this program offers includes helpful tips on choosing the right car seat for your child and can be accessed at <http://www.safercar.gov/parents/index.htm>.

Young Drivers

On July 1, 1996, Florida established the [Graduated Licensing System](#). The program gives young drivers more time to learn all the complex skills needed to drive a vehicle. The program consists of three stages beginning with the Learner's License. Young drivers are required to demonstrate responsible driving behaviors in each stage of licensing before advancing to the next. Studying the [Florida Driver Handbook](#) is the first step in a young person's journey to obtaining their driving privilege. For more information you can visit the Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles webpage at <http://www.flhsmv.gov/>.

Although independent circumstances are weighed, Punta Gorda officers have found that counseling young drivers rather than penalizing them with a citation for a minor traffic violation is often a valuable tool and building a relationship as well as gaining voluntary compliance.

Punta Gorda Uniform Patrol officers also have the option to contact the [School Resource Officer \(SRO\) at Charlotte High School](#) during a traffic stop involving a student. In some cases the SRO will respond to the location of the stop, meet with the officer and the student, and take an active role in educating the student regarding the matter. In most instances, the parent or guardian of the student is also notified. Parents are very appreciative of this approach and partner with the police department in correcting improper driving behaviors.

The Punta Gorda Police Department believes in communicating with parents. Officers who make contact with a young driver (juvenile) complete a department Juvenile Notification Form. When an officer has a reason to issue a warning or a citation to a juvenile driver, the officer will obtain the contact information for the parent/guardian and mail them a post card briefly describing the reason for the interaction with their son/daughter. In following



this procedure, we are assuring that the juvenile’s parents will learn of the traffic stop in a timely manner. On September 22, 2012, we upgraded our Juvenile Notification Form as depicted below.

Juvenile Notification Form

Why Punta Gorda Police stopped your teen....

More than 3,800 young drivers age 15-20 are killed every year in traffic crashes.


More than 326,000 young drivers are injured each year.

Young drivers are involved in fatal traffic crashes at over twice the rate of the rest of the population.


Parents

- Set a good example. Use good driving behaviors yourself.
- Get involved. Supervise your teen’s driving and impose restrictions on where, when, and with whom they drive.
- Practice. Let your teens drive whenever you are in the car together. Have them get their driving practice with you, not their with their friends.
- Talk to your teens about peer pressure, drugs, and underage drinking.

www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us



Notification of Traffic Violation



Date/Time: _____

Your son or daughter, _____, committed the below traffic violation(s) and was stopped by Punta Gorda Police Officer _____.

Location: _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Speeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Careless Driving
<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment Violation	<input type="checkbox"/> Ran Stop Sign/Red Light
<input type="checkbox"/> Improper Parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Verbal Warning
 Written Warning
 Citation# _____

This notification has been sent as a courtesy of the Punta Gorda Police Department. For details or questions, call 941-639-4111 and request to speak with the above officer.

Together we can make a difference and keep our children safe.



Section 7 – Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Punta Gorda Pathways

The [Punta Gorda Pathways](#) is a system of approximately 18 miles of Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails and Paths that will connect the City's neighborhoods, parks, and commercial areas. This system benefits resident and visitor alike, enhancing our quality of life. The Punta Gorda Pathways projects are funded through a combination of Federal Transportation Funds, 1 Cent Local Option Infrastructure Sale Tax, and private sector development projects. This major infrastructure investment represents a down payment on the path to a more sustainable Punta Gorda.



Punta Gorda Pathways Map

More information about the Punta Gorda Pathways can be found on the City's website at <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/depts/growthmgmt/ringaroundcity.html>.



Multi- Use Recreational Trail (MURT)

Approximately four (4) miles long the US 41 Multi-Use Recreational Trail provides visitors and residents an opportunity to connect to neighborhoods and commercial areas south of the historic core of Punta Gorda:

- Burnt Store Meadows
- Seminole Lakes
- Punta Gorda Library
- Muscle Car Museum
- YMCA (gym & tennis)
- Burnt Store Isles
- History Park
- Golf Course
- Hounds on Henry
- Shopping & Dining



Sharing the Shared-use Path

- Respect other trail users: joggers, walkers, wheelchairs all have trail rights Respect slower cyclists; yield to slower users Obey speed limits; they are posted for your safety
- Announce when passing: use a bell, horn or voice to indicate your intention to pass Warn others well in advance so you do not startle them clearly announce “On your left” when passing
- Yield when entering and crossing: yield to traffic at places where the trail crosses the road Yield to other users at trail intersections Slow down before intersections and when entering the trail from the road
- Keep right: stay as close to the right as possible, except when passing Give yourself enough room to maneuver around any hazards Ride single file to avoid possible collisions with other trail users
- Pass on left: scan ahead and behind before announcing your intention to pass another user Pull out only when you are sure the lane is clear Allow plenty of room, about two bike lengths, before moving back to the right

Harborwalk

Punta Gorda Harborwalk, established in 2010, is situated along scenic Charlotte Harbor. The Harborwalk encompasses approximately three (3) miles of Punta Gorda Pathways. This signature feature connects East Punta Gorda at Charlotte Regional Medical Center to West Punta Gorda at Fishermen’s Village with safe means of access under both US 41 bridges. Featured destination points along the Harborwalk include:

- Laishley Park Marina
- Interactive Fountain
- Trabue Park
- Restaurants/Shops/Hotels
- Laishley Park
- Gilchrist Park
- Fishing Pier
- Spirit of Punta Gorda Sculpture



Linear Park

The City's Linear Park transformed the historic railroad right-of-way, once the southern terminus of railroad service on the western coast of Florida, into a scenic trail. Connecting the Harborwalk, to the north, to US 41 at the southern end of downtown, the path traverses for approximately two (2) miles through the City's historic neighborhood district. Assessable from Linear Park Pathways are:

- Fisherman's Village (Restaurants/Shops/Marina)
- Visual Arts Center - Sculpture Park
- Educational Markers - Connection to Harborwalk

City Bike Loaner Program

At the Punta Gorda Police Department, citizens and their children are encouraged to practice proper bicycle safety through sponsored programs that educate the community concerning Florida's bicycle safety laws.

Through the public-private partnership between the City of Punta Gorda and TEAM Punta Gorda, the city offers the Bicycle Loaner program which provides free yellow bicycles that are located at our local hotels, merchants and marinas. This program offers the opportunity to enjoy a bike ride throughout our community by checking in with one of the various sponsors where you see the canary yellow bicycles.



The person borrowing the bicycle has to present the sponsor with their ID and credit card, sign a form "Notice to borrowers and operators of loaner bikes", and then they will receive the lock key to obtain a bicycle. The bicycle operators are given a bike tour map and instructed on bicycle safety rules with the request to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Loaner bikes are not equipped with headlamps. Bikes are to be returned to the pick-up location when the location requests the bike back.
2. Do not operate cell phones or headset devices while riding.
3. Wear proper footwear while operating the bike. Please no sandals or flip flops.
4. Riders must wear a helmet, No exceptions.
5. Be familiar with and operate the bicycle in a manner consistent with Florida Law Enforcement Guide which is available upon request.
6. When on the roadway you must act as a vehicle. When on the sidewalk you must act as a pedestrian.
7. Riders understand that they are responsible for damages to the bike beyond wear and tear.
8. Always lock the loaner bicycle when you stop.



Bicycle Laws

Punta Gorda Police Officers keep a strong focus on making sure that bicyclists in the community are safe by ensuring they are cycling with the flow of traffic on the roadway, obeying traffic signs and other rules of the road, and that night riders maintain proper lighting. Likewise, the agency is committed to enforcing motorist violations with respect to bicycle riders.

In the State of Florida, a bicycle is defined as a vehicle, and as such bicyclists have the same rights to the roadway, and must obey the same traffic laws as the drivers of other vehicles. [Florida Statute 316.083](#) requires the driver of a vehicle overtaking a bicycle, to pass the bicycle at a safe distance of **not less than 3 feet** between the vehicle and the bicycle. This is commonly referred to as the “3-foot rule.”

State law says bicyclists must ride as far to the right as *practicable*. It does NOT say as far to the right as possible. Practicable means capable of being done within the means and circumstances present. A cyclist should maintain no less than 2 feet of clearance from the edge of usable pavement to have room to maneuver around obstructions and to be more visible to crossing traffic. If there is a bicycle lane provided, or Multi-Use Recreational Lane, the cyclist is required to travel in those lanes.

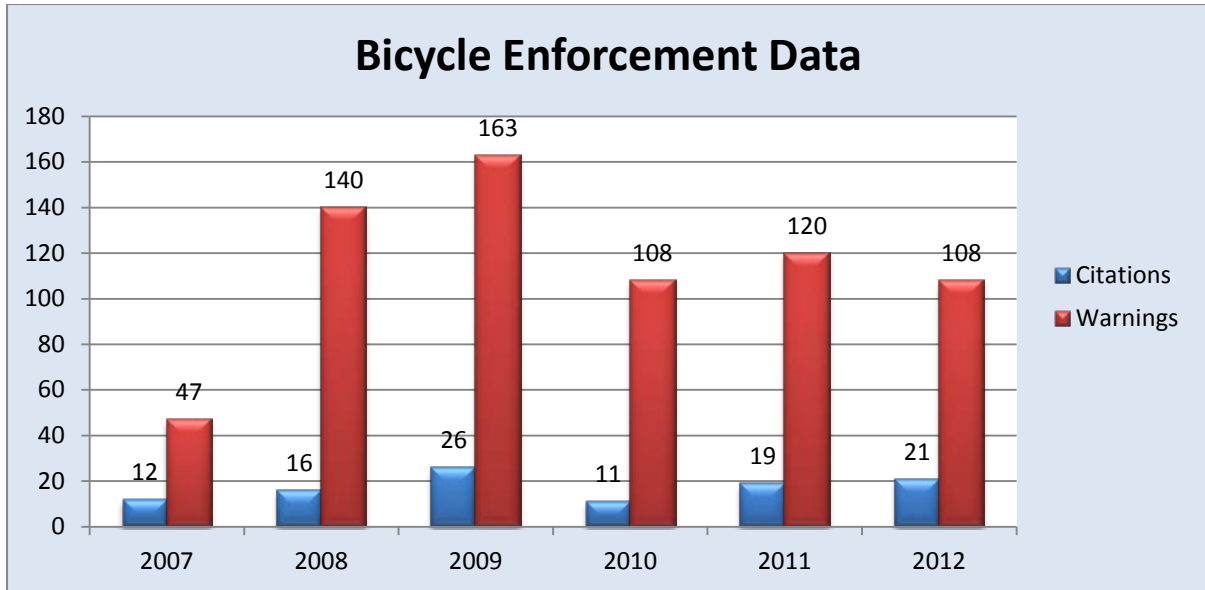
When riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks, a bicyclist has the same rights and duties as a pedestrian. A bicyclist riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and must give an audible signal before passing.

Other helpful bicycle safety tips:

- **On-street parking** — A cyclist riding past parked cars should maintain a clearance of 4 feet to avoid risk of collision with an opening car door.
- **Intersection positioning** — A cyclist going straight through an intersection in a lane that serves thru traffic and right turns, should ride in the center or left half of the lane to avoid common collisions. Cyclists should never ride straight in a lane marked exclusively for right turns, i.e., one marked or signed with the word "ONLY."
- **One-way streets** — A bicyclist operating on a one-way street with two or more traffic lanes may operate in the left lane.

A bicycle being operated between sunset and sunrise must be equipped with a lamp on the front exhibiting a white light visible from 500 feet to the front and both a red reflector and a lamp on the rear exhibiting a red light visible from 600 feet to the rear. Although not required, additional lighting is permitted and recommended. The risk of injury increases dramatically at night.





If you would like to read the complete set of Florida Bicycle laws, they are available on-line at the following link: [Florida Bicycle Statutes](#). Specific questions can be addressed by contacting the Punta Gorda Police Department at (941) 639-4111 and requesting to speak to the Bicycle Patrol Unit Team Leader. [The Florida Bicycle Law Enforcement Guide](#) is an additional resource that is available on-line.

With the proper education and safety, any bicyclist can experience an enjoyable ride throughout our beautiful City and experience the bike tours Punta Gorda has to offer.

Child Bicycle Helmet Distribution

The Punta Gorda Police Department frequently attends city events and bike rodeos to provide children with free bicycle helmets and ensure their proper fit. This program helps parents in the community keep their children safe and in compliance with [Florida State Statute 316.2065\(d\)](#), which states that all children under the age of 16 must wear a helmet while operating a bicycle.



The police department provides approximately 100 helmets each year to local youth. These helmets are funded through the Florida Department of Transportation. If a child is in need of a bicycle helmet and cannot afford to purchase one, their parent/guardian can contact the Community Services Section at (941) 575-5525, or email jking@pgorda.us.

Train Safety

According to [Operation Lifesaver, Inc.](#), a person or vehicle is hit by a train about every three hours. As there are miles of railway within the City limits of Punta Gorda, it is important to follow a few basic safety tips.



- ✓ **CROSSING TRACKS ON A BICYCLE REQUIRES CAUTION AND EXTRA ATTENTION!** Narrow wheels can get caught between the rails. If possible, walk - don't ride - across. Always cross at a 90-degree angle.
- ✓ **USE ONLY DESIGNATED RAILROAD CROSSINGS.** The only legal and safe place to cross railroad tracks is at a designated public crossing with a crossbuck, flashing red lights or a gate. Crossing at any other location is trespassing and illegal.
- ✓ **TURN OFF MUSIC AND REMOVE EARPHONES AT ALL RAIL CROSSINGS.** Music can be a deadly distraction near the tracks - preventing you from hearing an approaching train.
- ✓ **WET TRAIN TRACKS CAN BE SLIPPERY.** Dismount and walk your bike across the tracks. Step over the tracks - not on them - to avoid slipping.
- ✓ **IF YOU SEE A TRAIN COMING, WAIT!** Flashing lights or a lowering gate means a train is approaching. Do not proceed until the gates go completely up and the lights go off. It is illegal to go around lowered gates, whether on a bike, on foot or in a vehicle.

Pedestrian Safety

Ensuring pedestrian safety is an important role that the police department takes seriously as a priority to maintain a high quality of life for residents and business community. Florida's pedestrian laws and regulations can be located in [Florida State Statute 316.130](#).

Per the [United States Department of Transportation](#) and the [Federal Highway Administration](#); pedestrians should keep these tips in mind:

- Cross the street at a designated crosswalk. Attempt to make eye contact with the driver before crossing in front of them. Never assume any of the driver's actions.
- Walk on sidewalks or paths. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible.
- Be a safe pedestrian around cars. Watch for cars that are turning or backing up.
- Use caution at intersections, where drivers may fail to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians while turning onto another street.
- Increase visibility at night by carrying a flashlight and wearing reflective clothing.
- It's safest to walk on a sidewalk, but if it's unavoidable to walk on the side of the street, walk facing traffic.



According to the [National Highway Safety Administration 2009 Traffic Safety Facts report](#), in 2009, 4,092 pedestrians died in traffic crashes – a 7 percent decrease from the number reported in 2008. Florida was number two in the nation for the highest number of fatalities at 466. Florida led the nation in pedestrian fatalities per 100,000 population. The City of Punta Gorda has experienced one pedestrian fatality in the last three years. Uniform patrol officers are committed to reducing pedestrian fatalities with education and blended enforcement of pedestrian laws, along with a strong commitment to improve traffic engineering and design.

The Department of Transportation has installed pedestrian signals at select intersections throughout the City. These computer-controlled signals allow a safe way for pedestrians to cross the street. The pedestrian signal, when activated, provides time for the pedestrian to enter the street on the steady "WALK" signal and finish crossing the street on the flashing "DON'T WALK" signal. The pedestrian signal is activated by a pedestrian detector push-button, which causes the controller to operate a preprogrammed timed sequence of steady "WALK" and flashing "DON'T WALK" indications.



Safe Routes to School

The Safe Routes to School Program was authorized in August 2005 by Section 1404 of the federal transportation act, [SAFETEA-LU \(the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users\)](#). This program will provide a total of \$612 million in Federal-aid highway funds to State Departments of Transportation to make it safer, easier and more fun for children in grades K through 8, to walk or bicycle to and from school.

The purposes of the Safe Routes to School Program are:

- ✓ To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
- ✓ To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age, and
- ✓ To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Each Student that attends any Charlotte County school is given an educational pamphlet, which is provided by the Transportation Division of the Charlotte County School system. This pamphlet provides tips about how to choose the best route when going to school without the use of a school bus.

The Punta Gorda Police Department has an active member on the [Charlotte County School Transportation Review Committee](#) (TRC). This committee reviews any denied requests for exceptions to the transportation policies of the Charlotte County School Board. This committee serves as part of the Charlotte County School's multi-step process to ensure children are getting the transportation that they need within the law.



Section 8 – Other Highly Visible and Sustained Enforcement Efforts

Speed Enforcement – Traditional and Innovative Initiatives

The police department uses traditional techniques to address excessive speed infractions such as deploying our radar speed display trailer, moving and stationary radar and laser enforcement, vehicle pacing techniques, education efforts, etc. An innovative technique recently implemented is the **Unmanned Decoy Car**. These marked patrol cars are strategically placed at intersections or in areas with the focus of reducing traffic speeds and making our roads safer for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. This vehicle would otherwise be stationed at the police department as an alternate patrol car, in case a primary patrol vehicle is taken out of service.

According to a [study performed in July 2000 by the United States National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health](#), speeding is often implicated as a causal factor in motor vehicle crashes. One potential intervention to prevent speeding, is the placement of a roadside unmanned police car. The following is an excerpt from their study abstract:

RESULTS:

During the baseline surveillance, 72.0% of vehicles (186,578 of 259,074 motorists) had speeds greater than 45 mph. After placement of the unmanned police car, 41.0% of motorists (92,272 of 225,026 motorists) exceeded 45 mph ($p < .0001$). Over the 10-day study period, when the decoy police car was in place, the percentage of motorists exceeding 45 mph gradually increased from 27.2% to 47.4%. Upon removal of the police car, speeding returned approximately to baseline, with 67.5% of motorists (120,640 of 178,752 motorists) exceeding 45-mph.

CONCLUSION:

Parking an unmanned police car beside a road was associated with a large reduction in speeding over a 10-day period. Removal of the unmanned police car resulted in a return to preintervention speeding.

The Punta Gorda Police Department has been employing this crash-reduction technique for the past two years and has experienced positive citizen feedback. On occasion, the unmanned car is replaced with a manned patrol car to conduct enforcement campaigns.

Red Light Violations and Red Light Cameras

Per [Florida State Statute 316.075](#), an operator of a motor vehicle is required to come to a complete stop at the stop bar, or if none exists, then before entering a crosswalk or before entering into an intersection.

Unless otherwise prohibited by signage, while making a turn on a red light, a driver must come to a stop, yielding to pedestrians and other traffic having the right-of-way.



The City of Punta Gorda does not utilize red light cameras as a means of red light violation enforcement. The police department maintains an aggressive stance on violation education and enforcement.



Reckless Driving

According to [Florida State Statute 316.192](#), reckless driving is defined as any person who drives any vehicle in willful or wanton disregard for the safety of persons or property. This is a criminal offense; a second degree misdemeanor that may result in incarceration up to 90 days, loss of driving privileges, as well as other monetary and administrative penalties.

The police department has made an average of one (1) reckless driving arrest per year during the period of 2011 through 201. Keeping these incidents at a minimal number is a direct reflection of the department's highly visible enforcement on our City's main thoroughfares, such as US41.

Parking Violations

The City of Punta Gorda has several parking ordinances in effect which help make the city a safer place for both drivers and pedestrians. These ordinances are enforced by police officers and Volunteers in Policing personnel who are specially trained in parking enforcement and traffic control. Residents should be aware of and understand these parking laws. A few examples are below.

Handicapped parking:

Any person who stops, stands or parks a vehicle in, or obstructs any parking space designated as provided in sub-subsection (a)(2), or otherwise clearly labeled for "Parking By Disabled Permit Only," is guilty of a civil traffic infraction, punishable by a fine of one hundred dollars (\$100.00).

(a) Except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic, or in compliance with law or the directions of a police officer or official traffic control sign or signal, no person shall:

Other parking:

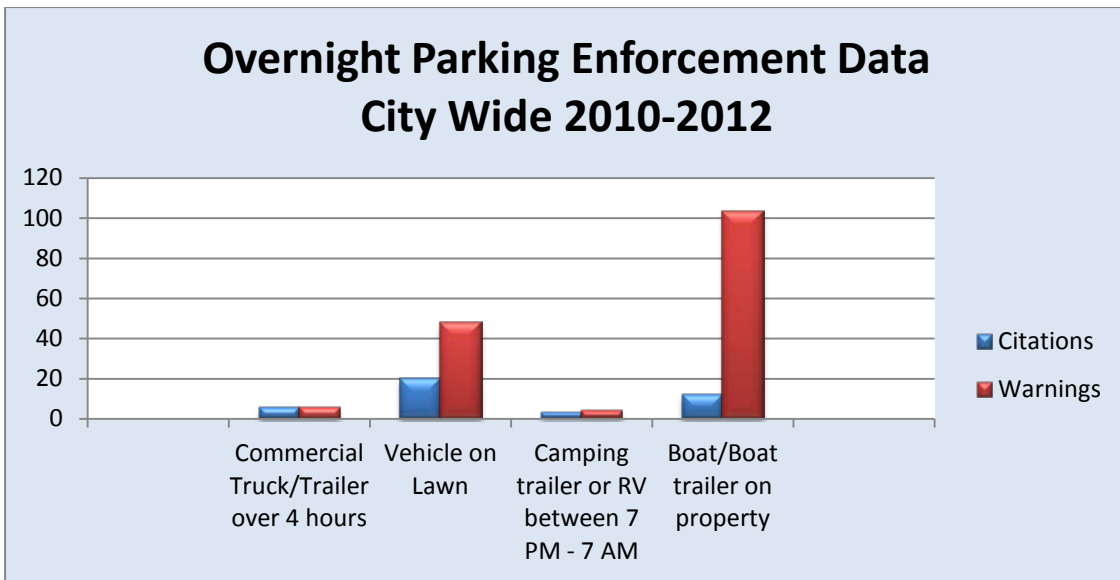
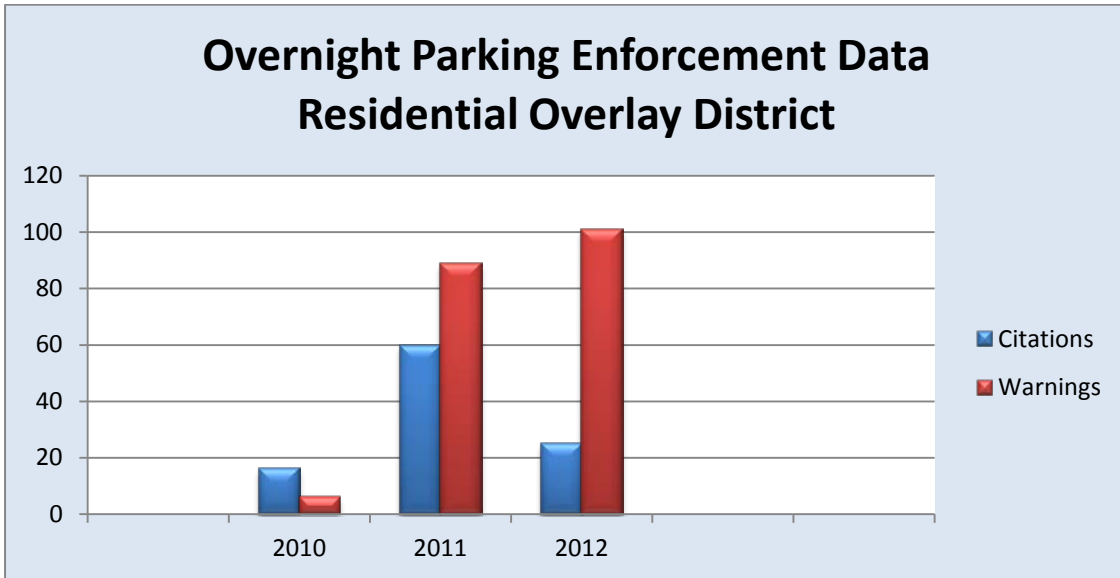
Stand or park a vehicle, whether occupied or not, except temporarily for the purpose of and while actually engaged in receiving or discharging passengers:

- In a Fire Lane;
- Within fifteen (15) feet of a fire hydrant;
- At any place where an official traffic control sign or signal prohibits parking;
- On any vacant land or public right-of-way located in the special zoning districts



Overnight parking:

No vehicle shall be kept or parked on vacant land zoned for residential purposes or on a public right-of-way in the Special Residential Overlay District⁷ between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.



All parking ordinances can be found on the City of Punta Gorda’s website under [Code of Ordinances, under Chapter 23](#).

⁷ Special Residential Overlay District was established in 1986 to provide control to land subdivided within the City, more commonly known as Punta Gorda Isles, Burnt Store Isles, and Burnt Store Meadows.



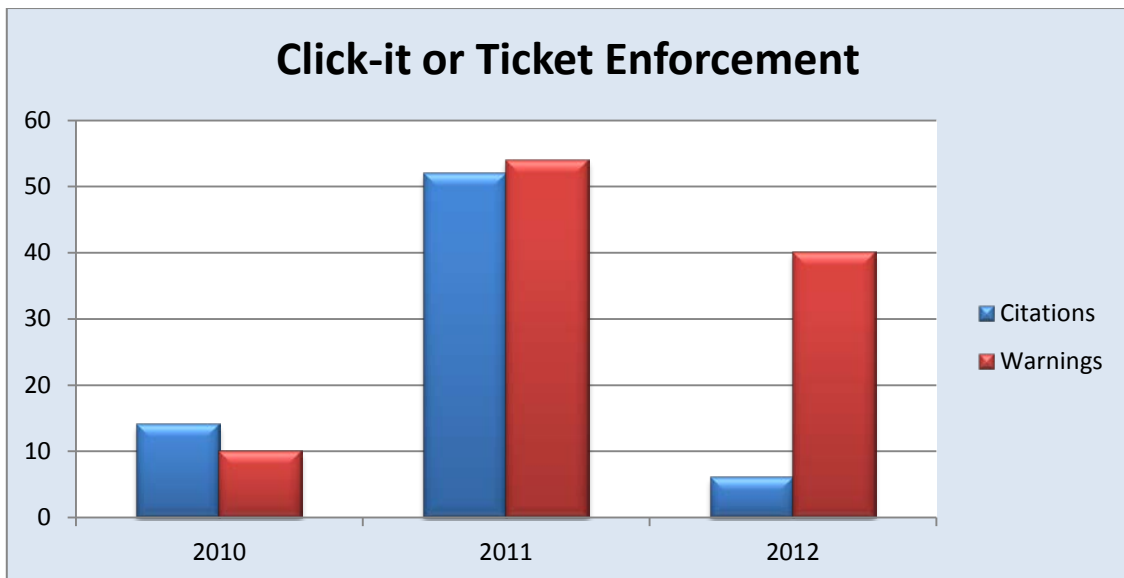
Section 9 - Traffic Education and Enforcement Initiatives

Traffic Education and Enforcement Initiatives

[Click-it or Ticket/Buckle-Up Seat Belt Enforcement](#)



Law Enforcement Officers know that seat belts save lives. To that end, one of our goals is to participate in education and enforcement campaigns such as Click it or Ticket. Click It or Ticket is a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration campaign aimed at increasing the use of seat belts among people in the United States. The campaign relies heavily on targeted advertising.



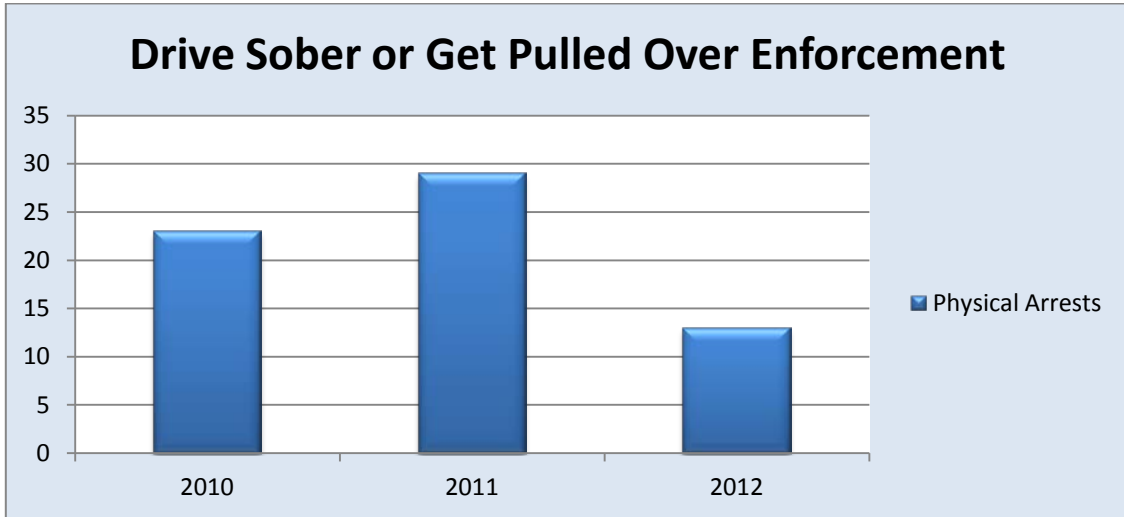
[Over the Limit – Under Arrest/Holiday DUI Enforcement](#)

Impaired driving is one of America's most often committed and deadliest crimes. In Florida, it is illegal to drive with a breath or blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher. Yet 10,228 people died nationally in 2010 in traffic crashes in which at least one vehicle driver or motorcycle rider had a BAC of .08 or higher.





In an effort to get impaired drivers off the road, raise public awareness about the dangers of impaired driving, and most importantly, to save more lives on city roadways, the police department participates in the national impaired-driving enforcement crackdowns known as "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over."



Florida Motor Unit Challenge

The Florida Department of Transportation (F.D.O.T.) instituted the Motor Unit Challenge to recognize the value and positive impact of Motorcycle Patrol Units on traffic safety programs. Motor units submit an application that documents their traffic safety efforts and effectiveness.

The Motor Unit Challenge provides opportunities for public recognition of exemplary motor unit traffic programs, incentives for continuing activities, and documentation of unit effectiveness. This documentation can help provide accountability and prove the value of a strong traffic program and Motor Patrol Unit.

In 2010, the Punta Gorda Police Department Motor Unit finished sixth in the State of Florida, winning \$9,000.00 in equipment. In 2011, the Punta Gorda Police Department Motor Unit finished in the top twenty in the State of Florida, winning an additional \$7,500.00 in equipment.



Section 10 – Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the little blue lights on the bottom of traffic signals?

The official name of these blue lights is a Traffic Signal Confirmation Light. When a light turns red, the blue light comes on, allowing police to identify red light runners from any angle at the intersection, even if the officer cannot see the actual red light. The lights are located at targeted intersections that have a potential for high-volume red light violations.



2. Can I make a right turn on a red light?

Yes, but carefully and only *after* coming to a complete stop. [Florida State Statute 316.075](#) provides that on a steady red light, the driver of a vehicle must stop at the clearly marked stop line or crosswalk line. The driver should yield right of way to pedestrians and other traffic proceeding as directed by the signal at the intersection. An intersection frequently questioned is turning onto US 41 Northbound from Taylor Road. A right turn on red is permissible at this intersection; however, caution should be used for the safety of pedestrians in the area.

3. Can I make a left turn at a red light?

Yes, but only if traveling on a one-way street which intersects with another one-way street in which traffic moves to the left. You still need to stop in obedience to the steady red light, as well as yield right of way to pedestrians and oncoming traffic.

3.a How about the center lane on Olympia Avenue turning left onto North Tamiami Trail?

[Florida State Statute 316.075](#) addresses making left turns onto a one-way from a one-way street, and does specifically address the two-lane turn option in question. Turning from the center lane is legal, requiring a complete stop and yielding to oncoming traffic prior to making the turn. However, extra caution should be used as your vehicle will be crossing three lanes of northbound traffic on Tamiami Trail.

4. Do I need a driver's license to operate a moped?

This is covered under [Florida State Law Chapter 322](#). According to the law, unless the subject vehicle has pedals in which the vehicle is propelled by a combination of human power and an electric helper motor, you WILL need a driver's license to operate it. The myth surrounding the "under 50 CCs" provision negating the need for a driver's license is false. The only statutory difference is if your vehicle is under 50 CCs, you will not need a Motorcycle Endorsement.



5. Can I drive my golf cart in my neighborhood?

No. [Florida State Statute 316.212](#), provides that the operation of a golf cart upon the public roads or streets of this state is prohibited. There are provisions outlined in the law that allow municipalities the opportunity to designate certain roadways for the safe operation of golf carts, but no such roads exist in the City limits of Punta Gorda.

6. There is no speed limit sign on the street. What is the speed limit in my neighborhood?

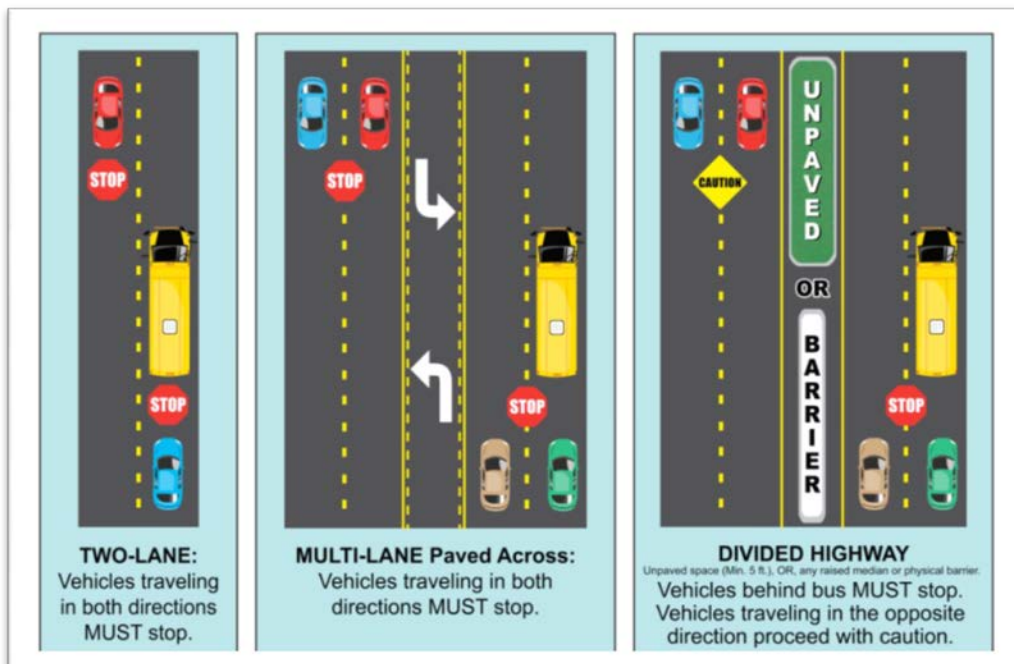
Unless otherwise posted, Florida law and the [Florida Driver's Handbook](#) cites Florida's "standard" speed limit at 30 miles per hour in both municipal speed areas as well as business or residential areas.

6.a People are always speeding on my street. How can I request the police department conduct extra traffic enforcement in my neighborhood?

City residents are encouraged to voice their traffic-related concerns directly to the Punta Gorda Police Department, by phone or via our on-line [Traffic Enforcement Request Form](#). We evaluate every request and assign resources as deemed appropriate. If you wish, you will also receive a follow-up contact to find out the results of our efforts.

7. When do I have to stop for a school bus?

On a two way street or highway, all drivers moving in either direction must stop for a stopped school bus which is picking-up or dropping-off children. You must remain stopped until all children are clear of the roadway and the bus' stop arm is withdrawn. If the highway is



divided by a raised barrier or an unpaved median at least five feet wide, you do



not have to stop if you are moving in the opposite direction of the bus. Painted lines or pavement markings are not considered barriers. You must always stop if you are moving in the same direction as the bus and you must remain stopped until the bus stop arm is withdrawn.

8. What should I do when a Police Officer pulls me over?

There may come a time where you get stopped by the police while operating your vehicle. Although traffic stops are quite frequent, each one is different and has the potential for danger. Hopefully, after reading this you will better understand what happens at a traffic stop and what you can do to minimize the dangers to both yourself and the officer involved.

For starters, it is important to know that **more police officers are killed each year while conducting traffic stops than during any other police function.** Because of this statistic, officers are trained to approach each vehicle with due care and caution.

The most common reason for a traffic stop is a minor civil motor vehicle infraction. What this means is the officer observed your vehicle breaking a minor traffic law (there are several hundred of them) and by law is required to give you a citation or warning documenting the violation. Usually, the officer will follow your vehicle and signal you to pull over by activating the emergency lights and/or siren. The law requires that you pull your vehicle to the right and stop. At this stage of the traffic stop, it is very important that you do not get out of your vehicle. The officer may direct you to move your vehicle to a different location in order to conduct the traffic stop. This is done if the officer believes the current location is unsafe for either you, the officer, or the other passing motorists.

If the traffic stop is taking place at night, turn on your interior or dome light. By illuminating the interior of your vehicle, you show the officer how many people are in the car and what they are doing. Turn off your radio, as it will help you and the officer hear each other when speaking. It is also a good idea to leave both your hands on the steering wheel until the officer has spoken to you for the first time. Keeping your hands in view at all times shows the officer you have nothing to hide.

If you remember the below five things, your traffic stop experience should be much more relaxed and friendly.

- stay in your vehicle
- turn on your interior light
- keep your passengers still and quiet (if applicable)
- keep both hands on the steering wheel until the officer tells you otherwise
- don't make any sudden movements in the car, especially under the front seats, in the center console or in the glove compartment

9. What are the guidelines that an officer uses when deciding whether to issue a ticket or a warning?



The Punta Gorda Police Department has a traffic enforcement policy emphasizing firm, fair, and consistent enforcement of traffic violations. The ultimate goal of directed traffic enforcement is the reduction of accidents and injuries. Through speaking to the violator, an Officer uses their discretion to determine whether a warning or citation is warranted to ensure the violation will not occur again.

Resources and Related Information

[2012 Florida Driver's Handbook](#) (PDF Download)

[National Highway Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#) Provides information on driving and vehicle safety.

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/>

<http://www.distraction.gov>

The official Government website on distracted driving.

http://www.ehow.com/list_6887634_cell-phone-laws-united-states.html

Cell Phone Laws across the United States.

