

# SPEEDING COMPLAINTS IN TAHOE DONNER ADDRESSED

BY ADAM MCGILL, TOWN OF TRUCKEE CHIEF OF POLICE

The Truckee Police Department has had a longstanding goal of proactively addressing traffic complaints and promoting safe driving in general. Traffic complaints within neighborhoods, especially speeding vehicles, are one of the most frequently reported complaints we receive.

The Truckee Police Department has a traffic enforcement program that creates Special Enforcement Zones by analyzing data and working with concerned neighbors to efficiently target education and enforcement in locations and times when the increased enforcement will mitigate the speeding as much as possible. Through comprehensive analysis of all the information available, we are quickly able to identify what traffic issue is present, if any, and develop a measured approach that can be collaboratively developed with the community members in any neighborhood.

At times we find that perceptions of a traffic complaint can be just as critical to address as factual data that point to an actual safety issue. This is particularly true with speeding complaints. There are numerous approaches for analyzing and addressing perceived problems but they all are dependent on communication and collaboration.



Truckee Police Department has a traffic enforcement program and analyzes data and works with concerned neighbors.

An excellent example is Northwoods Boulevard in Tahoe Donner. The Police Department recently used a discreet radar device to analyze the speed of vehicles traveling in both directions. The speed data from 15,000 vehicles revealed that 85 percent of the vehicles were traveling at 43 MPH or less in an area where the speed limit is 35 MPH. Ten percent of the speeds captured involved vehicles traveling over 46 MPH. This was cross-referenced with data collected on traffic accidents on Northwoods Blvd. A vast majority of the traffic collisions involved snow conditions and unsafe speeds for the inclement weather with very few reported in non-snow periods of the year. These facts indicate the overall driving habits in Tahoe Donner are not unsafe even though the perception is otherwise by some in the community.

The statistics aside, we still receive genuine perceptions from the community that Tahoe Donner has a traffic safety issue from speeding vehicles. The Truckee Police Department continues to be committed to communicate and collaborate to address those perceptions and concerns. In 2013 there were 93 citations issued on Northwoods Boulevard; 143 issued in 2014, and 134 issued in 2015. We have significantly increased our presence, warnings, and traffic enforcement throughout all areas of Tahoe Donner. In 2013 there were 181 citations issued in Tahoe Donner; 218 issued in 2014, and 263 issued in 2015. In addition to the citations, there were hundreds of enforcement stops conducted to bring further awareness to the issue.

Despite our best effort, the sense of traffic safety in our neighborhoods cannot be achieved until we ALL take responsibility. It is our collective responsibility as a community to slow down. Too often we hear that increased enforcement solves the complaint but the issue slowly returns once the increased police presence returns to normal. The long-term solution is for all of us to “police” ourselves and to drive on every roadway as if it were our street with our families living there. Be a neighborhood “pace car” by obeying traffic laws yourself, and by setting the example that you are committed to safer streets.

If you have a traffic issue in your neighborhood or on your street, please contact the Truckee Police Department at 530-550-2323. The more specific information given in these complaints, the better equipped we are to make a significant impact. Specific vehicle descriptions are helpful as well as times of day the violations occur. While this information is very helpful, your safety is more important. Under almost no circumstances should you follow or confront perceived violators in an effort to obtain information.



## SLOW DOWN AND ENJOY TAHOE DONNER

**PREPARED BY TIM CROSS**, MEMBER AND ADHOC NEIGHBOR GROUP COORDINATOR FOR SPEED REDUCTION IN TAHOE DONNER

In case you weren't aware, Tahoe Donner is suffering from an epidemic of speeding drivers. Both local and out of town residents are in too much of a hurry and we need to focus on slowing down on our roadways. We all have busy lives and places we need to get to but it is most important to arrive safely and drive slower for the safety of our neighbors.

According to Director of Risk Management Annie Rosenfeld, "Many part-time and full-time owners have reported increasing speeding in Tahoe Donner. These members are taking a stand and hope through increased communication, fellow members and their guests will slow down and consider the 25 and 35 mph speed zones in Tahoe Donner. Most vehicles these days have automatic transmission, so unless there is active downshifting to a lower gear, vehicles quickly accelerate and easily exceed the speed limits. Additionally, much of Tahoe Donner is hilly thus creating an active braking situation unless a driver consciously downshifts to aid in reducing speed as it accelerates downhill."

As a once part-time resident, now full-time, let me put forth scenarios many of us have experienced. It's Friday night and it is the end of a long work week. The drive up to Truckee has been long and horrendous. If only we could get there quicker. Or, it's Monday morning and there is a feeling of a need to speed to make it on time.

Sound familiar? No doubt we've all been in these situations. Residents and visitors alike need to consider the possible consequences of our driving behavior. In particular, we need to take notice if we are conscious of the vehicle speed along with distractions such as the cell phone, and GPS unit in the vehicle.

Someone's beloved dog naively walks out into the street and is struck down and killed. A cat is desperate to make it home across the street and is also killed. A deer innocently steps out onto the road and is mowed down and later has to be put down. Worst case scenarios you may say, but my friend's dog was killed a little over a year ago in front of his home. I saw a dead cat lying on the side of the road just a week

ago, and today I heard word of a beautiful four-point buck with velvet antlers that was struck down. All were killed by people speeding on Northwoods Boulevard and streets like Alder Creek Road, Stockholm, and others.

These are some of the more obvious consequences of driving too fast. Less obvious impacts include noise and possibly ruining your neighbor's experience who are here to enjoy the serenity of the mountains.

So it is with hope that I ask that all of you slow down. Please be considerate and thoughtful of all of your neighbors wherever you may live. We all want to enjoy everything that Tahoe Donner has to offer and we can accomplish this if we change our mindset about speeding. Please slow it down and relax.

What else can we as a community do to protect the nature of the community, as well as our loved ones? We can communicate to our neighbors that we consider this a serious issue. We can also engage the local law enforcement representatives to ensure appropriate traffic enforcement takes place, through frequent conversations and direct feedback to them. According to Rosenfeld, "The Truckee Police are very cognizant of the excessive residential street speeds. Last year as requested by Tahoe Donner and various members, the police increased their presence within the community during the busy peak summer season. The same request was made earlier this summer, by Tahoe Donner members and the Truckee Town Council. Three out of the five members of the Truckee Town Council live in Tahoe Donner, thus they often experience this issue firsthand as well." Rosenfeld encourages members to communicate concerns directly to both the police department and town council representatives.

This summer is prime time for recreating in this fantastic community and region. We are also shortly turning the corner for school to be in session, which means children walking to and from school bus stops. Now is the time to adjust our driving behavior to further resident safety and to enjoy this wonderful place. Join me and many other members in the endeavor to slow down.