

Greeley Police Department experiments with new law enforcement model in rolling out traffic safety initiative

Joy Moylan, 2/10/15, [The Greeley CO Tribune](#)

2015 TRAFFIC FATALITY NUMBERS

Just 40 days into the new calendar year, Weld County has already recorded 16 traffic-related fatalities — 13 in January and three so far in February. Last year, Weld did not record its first fatality until Feb. 25.

Motorists commuting in Greeley can expect to soon see increased traffic enforcement efforts in the city.

Greeley Police Chief Jerry Garner said his department has finalized plans for the implementation of a refocused traffic safety initiative in response to last year's alarming increase in traffic-related fatalities in Greeley and Weld County.

In addition to bolstering educational efforts, especially for teenage drivers, and specifically targeting distracted and reckless drivers, the police department also is beginning to experiment with a relatively new law enforcement model known as Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety, or DDACTS.

The technique, which is supported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Department of Justice, was developed around the theory that areas plagued by high rates of traffic crashes more often than not also experience high levels of crime, and vice-versa. Although that's not always the case, the concept seems like an obvious strategy for reducing both crime and fatal traffic crashes as Garner, Weld County Sheriff Steve Reams and several other officers have all recently noted that criminals drive cars too.

"It's like how one of my officers recently put it," Garner said. "If a guy is willing to rob, rape and steal why would any of us think he wouldn't also run a stop sign? If you want to catch career criminals, you have to make traffic stops."

To begin implementing DDACTS, law enforcement agencies begin by pulling historical crime and traffic crash data, and analyzes it to identify where high rates of both overlap. Patrol officers then concentrate on those areas to target distracted and reckless drivers.

Traffic citations will go up as a result of the traffic safety initiative, Garner admitted, but maintained that he is not sending his officers out on a fundraising campaign.

"I don't believe in chicken tickets, so we're not going to be pulling people over for and issuing tickets for a cracked taillight," Garner said. "We may stop you to let you know you're taillight is cracked and issue you a warning, but those aren't the people causing accidents. I'm much more interested in targeting the distracted and the reckless drivers who do."

It likely will be several months before the department can identify whether or not DDACTS is reducing crime and crash rates, Garner said, but the chief is hopeful considering the model is proving itself effective in municipalities across the country where it's already been established.

In 2014, there were eight reported traffic-related deaths in Greeley, which was twice as many as 2013.

Overall in the county, there were 62 reported traffic fatalities in 2014 — up from 37 in 2013. That's an increase of 40 percent after a decade of steady declines.

Although 2014 doesn't claim the infamous distinction as the deadliest year ever in Weld County, it did mark the highest year-over-year increase in traffic-related fatalities on record.