

OPP Commissioner urging drivers to change behaviour

As Ontario continues to get battered by one of the worst winters in recent history, the OPP Commissioner and OPP Provincial Commander of Traffic Safety and Operational Support (TSOS) are taking a hard line with the numerous drivers who, through poor driving behaviour, are causing a steady rash of collisions, some of which are jeopardizing the safety of OPP officers and other emergency personnel responding to collision scenes.

Three OPP cruisers have been struck by passing motorists since Monday and two of those collisions occurred today on provincial highways. One OPP officer was taken to hospital after his cruiser was struck from behind while stopped behind a transport truck.

This past weekend, eight OPP cruisers were struck by passing motorists and two police officers received minor injuries.

“I want to make it very clear: severe weather and poor driving conditions are not the main cause in the overwhelming number of collisions we've seen these past several weeks. It is the way people are driving in these conditions that jeopardizes the safety of the motoring public and our officers. This irresponsible driving behaviour must stop,” says OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis.

The OPP has been inundated with calls for service during the numerous storms that have hit the province so far this winter. The OPP has responded to thousands of calls for service due to irresponsible driving in winter weather conditions but according to Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, Provincial Commander of TSOS, this is unacceptable.

“There is no question that our harsh winter weather has made for some very treacherous driving conditions lately but as is the case every winter, it is the drivers who do not adjust their driving to the weather and driving conditions that are usually the ones involved in the collisions,” says Blair. “Most of the crashes being investigated by our officers involve drivers who either lost control because they did not slow down when they needed to or who ignored our warnings to avoid non-essential travel when the weather was particularly severe,” added Blair.

According to Blair, when you get caught driving in particularly bad weather, it is not enough to keep your speed below the posted limit – you need to slow right down. This is critical to maintaining control of your vehicle and avoiding a collision.

Commissioner Lewis and Deputy Commissioner Blair are also stressing the importance of being highly visible while out on the road when visibility is poor and this means driving with the full set of headlights on. The OPP has received a number of complaints from people who continue to observe motorists driving in poor visibility with just their daytime running lights on. In heavy snowfall or blowing snow, these vehicles cannot be seen well by drivers and they are virtually invisible to those who approach from behind.

The OPP is urging motorists to be prepared and pay careful attention during the winter months. Watch for emergency responders, slow down and move over if it is safe to do so in accordance with the law. Adjust your driving to the conditions and do your part to keep you, your passengers and all other road users safe.