

Pasadena Citizens' Advisory Council

Summary of October 28, 2014 Meeting

PASADENA POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMERCIAL VEHICLE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

Slides posted at www.pasadenacac.org

Sgt. Gary White, Supervisor of the Pasadena Police Department's DOT/Commercial Vehicle Enforcement (CVE) program, briefly described the truck safety inspection program and commented on increased truck traffic in Pasadena associated with industry expansions and Panama Canal expansion.

The mission of the CVE program is "to save lives, protect resources, and ensure the safety of the traveling public by preventing crashes through the training and enforcement of local, state, and federal regulations." The officers are certified US Department of Transportation (DOT) inspectors with specialized training in cargo tanks and hazardous materials transportation. In addition to conducting safety inspections of commercial vehicles, the unit reports to scenes of collisions involving commercial vehicles and other calls for service. The day prior to the meeting, for example, they assisted with an accident that resulted in a fatality.

The attached slides provide facts about commercial motor vehicle (CMV) traffic in Pasadena, enforcement, trends in violations, program goals, and typical programs. From January 1 – June 30, 2014, there have been 71 accidents in Pasadena involving commercial vehicles, most of them during the week. The CVE unit may ticket drivers but may also ask the Texas Department of Public Safety to investigate a trucking company's finances. White showed a series of photos to let members see the kind of violations found by the CVE unit on Pasadena roads.

Commercial motor vehicle is defined by law as a motor vehicle other than a motorcycle designed or used primarily to transport property. In addition, vehicles like church buses that carry 17 or more passengers fall under the CMV definition. But certain farm equipment is exempted from the CMV definition.

Officers are seeing an increase in commercial motor vehicle traffic and in weight violations. The continuing expansion of the Port of Houston is expected to increase the number of commercial motor vehicles on the road, which will increase the need for inspections to be sure they are meeting the law. The most frequent violators of transportation safety laws are the intermodal transporters. Intermodal means transferring container cargo from one mode of transportation to another; e.g. a container arrives by one mode of transportation (ship) and is placed on another mode of transportation (truck or train) to travel to its destination. The unit also pulls trucks over for using the far left, fast lane for travel rather than passing. Cars also should use that lane only for passing.

CVE officers turn to Harris County's hazardous materials unit when there is a leak or other problem. If there is an environmental leak, a commercial response firm usually does the cleanup on behalf of the trucking company.

Asked about hazardous material routes in Pasadena, White said the truck routes in the city are essentially all major roads. Hazardous material shipments should not be trucked into residential neighborhoods unless being delivered there. These trucks are not permitted to cut through neighborhoods to get from one major road to another.