



SAFE COMMUNITY COALITION
OF MADISON & DANE COUNTY

**STOP ON RED CAMPAIGN
JULY 15 – 17, 2002**

EVALUATION REPORT

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STOP ON RED CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

Safe Community Coalition Stop On Red Campaign
July 15 –17,2002

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

There were 4 Madison neighborhoods and 10 law enforcement agencies from across Dane County that participated in the campaign. *See Appendix 1 for details of participation.*

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM?

Running red lights and stop signs are among the top causes of crashes, motor vehicle property damage and injury in Dane County. According to the City of Madison 2001 Crash Report (City of Madison Traffic Engineering), there were 1,761 traffic crashes at intersections. Half of these intersection crashes were at signalized intersections. There were 307 intersections (signalized and non-signalized) with two or more crashes. The most common driver factors at signalized intersections are failure to yield right of way and disregarding traffic control.

Red light running and ignoring stop signs was also identified as one of the top traffic safety concerns by over 80 people who attended the Community Traffic Summit, held in May of 2000.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The focus of the “Stop on Red” campaign was to prevent traffic crashes at Madison and Dane County high crash intersections. Bright pink signs, reading “High Crash Intersection, - Yellow Means Stop on Red” in a “Burma Shave” fashion, were posted in advance of high crash intersections. In Madison, the actual number of crashes that had occurred in the past year at one of the five chosen intersections was also posted. In addition to posting signs, law enforcement agencies monitored high crash intersections and issued red and yellow light violation citations during the campaign.

DID DRIVER BEHAVIOR CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THE CAMPAIGN?

The 5 sites chosen for the campaign and evaluation in Madison were among the top 10 high crash intersections (1998 – 2000) and among the top 20 in 2001. *See Appendix 2 for Madison top 10 high crash intersections.* Observations of driver behavior were made, using a standardized checklist, before, during and after the campaign, for a period of an hour, unless otherwise indicated. The observation times chosen were based on the peak high crash times for that particular intersection. Observations were also made at a high crash intersection in Fitchburg. *See Appendix 3 for the Checklist used for observations.*

Types of violations counted in totals for red light running:

- 1) Red light prior to entering intersection – going straight or turning left (Enter Red, Straight or Left);
- 2) Not stopping for a red light when making a right turn (Enter Red, Right Turn);
- 3) Going through a yellow light and light turned red when the vehicle was less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the intersection (Exit Red, Straight or Left*); and
- 4) Vehicle does not stop for yellow light before making right turn when it should have safely stopped (Exit Red, Right Turn).

The Statute regarding a Yellow Signal violation reads:” When shown with or following a green, traffic facing a yellow signal shall stop before entering the intersection unless so close to it that a stop may not be made in safety.” This is discretionary, but it can result in a citation and fine. In Madison, it is \$74 and 3 points on your license.

** It is legal to turn left when the light turns yellow or red, if the vehicle entered the intersection when the light was green.*

What Happened **BEFORE** the Campaign?

In Madison, for a period of 60 minutes, there was a large number of red light and yellow light violations observed before the campaign, ranging from 56 to 100 vehicles running red lights.

Intersection Location	Total Number of Red Light Running Violations
Park St. and Badger Rd.	100
E. Washington Ave. and First St.	85
W. Johnson St. and Broom St.	56
Midvale Blvd. and Mineral Point Rd.	69
S. Gammon Rd. and Mineral Point Rd.	*

* Data collection at this site, before the campaign, is not valid or comparable.

In Fitchburg, at Highway 18 and Williamsburg, 42 red light running violations were observed.

See Appendix 4 for charts of a detailed account of violations at each intersection.

Observers noted that it was common for drivers to accelerate when they saw a yellow light rather than slowing down to stop for the red light. This behavior was especially true at Gammon & Mineral Point (15 in 30 minutes) and Midvale & Mineral Point (15 in 60 minutes). Since this observation was subjective, it was not counted in the red light running totals.

Vehicles stopping beyond the stop line are classified as a red light violation, but they were not counted in totals of red light running in this paper. This behavior was most prevalent at Gammon & Mineral Point (121 in 30 minutes) and Johnson & Broom (43 in 60 minutes), that can be very hazardous to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Other dangerous driving behavior observed included the following:

- Drivers failing-to-yield on a left turn or failing-to-yield when making a right turn. Gammon & Mineral Point was highest in both of these cases.
- Speeding at intersections was seen at all locations, especially Midvale & Mineral Point (37) and Park & Badger (14). However, it should be noted that this was subjective by the observer because there were no radar units or speed boards at the observation site.
- Lane change hazards occurred most often at Gammon & Mineral Point and E. Washington & First St. This included turning into the wrong lane (center or far lane), switching lanes in the intersection and not using the turn indicator. This could be especially dangerous if two vehicles were both attempting to go into the center lane - one vehicle turning right and an oncoming vehicle turning left. On 2 occasions, near misses such as these, were observed at E. Washington and First St.

This study also found that the pedestrians & bicyclists were most often not following the rules of the road, not the driver, when both were present at an intersection. At Gammon and Mineral Point, pedestrians or bicyclists crossed during a “no walk” signal on 11 occasions. At Johnson and Broom, pedestrians and bicyclists were observed 11 times either crossing during a “no walk” signal or diagonally crossing the street or intersection.

Examples of aggressive driving behavior were seen repeatedly:

- A vehicle approached the intersection during a green light to make a left turn. This vehicle waited through a yellow and red light before making a left turn, when 1-3 cars suddenly entered the intersection (light already red) to turn left behind the front vehicle. This was seen at Park and Badger 11 times.
- A vehicle entered the intersection after the light had turned red, and then 4 to 5 other vehicles followed. This was seen at E. Washington and First on 4 occasions. This was also seen at Park and Badger at least 3 times.
- Vehicles were backed up beyond the intersection. A vehicle waited behind the stop line for the intersection to clear. As soon as the light turned yellow, this same vehicle crossed the intersection without the ability to clear and expected oncoming traffic to wait. This was seen at Johnson and Broom 6 times. In fact, a rear end crash occurred at this intersection because a vehicle was more concerned about getting across the intersection and did not notice that the cars were stopped ahead. On 2 other occasions, vehicles had to slam on their brakes at this intersection to avoid a crash.
- Observers noted several times at all intersections that drivers honked their horn at the vehicle in front of them that stopped on a red light before turning right.
- When an observer was waiting to cross the street at the corner of Midvale and Mineral Point, a driver accelerated 50 yards from the intersection as the light was turning yellow and entered the intersection after the light had already turned red. Two right of way vehicles, practicing defensive driving, were forced to slam on their brakes and the observer was forced to jump away from the curb.

What Was Observed **DURING** the Campaign?

There was a definite decrease in the numbers of vehicles running red lights during the campaign. However, this was only at intersections where signs were up and increased enforcement took place during the time of the observation. Enforcement times varied but it was scheduled during peak traffic and high crash times for each particular intersection. The effect seemed to be the most dramatic when there was a wave of police vehicles issuing

citations (3-4 squad cars). Examples of the positive influence of enforcement on reducing red light running:

- E. Washington & First had a reduction in red light running from 85 to 53. (4 citations for red or yellow signals were issued during the 60-minute observation period.)
- Johnson & Broom had a reduction in red light running from 56 to 16. (6 citations for red and yellow signals were issued during this time period)

Officers reported, when issuing citations that drivers knew better because the drivers had reported having seen the signs. There was a total of 23 citations issued at the peak times at the chosen 5 intersections in Madison.

In Fitchburg, where the campaign also included increased enforcement, there was a reduction from 42 red light running violations to 28 red light running violations during the campaign.

It should be noted that observations at Gammon and Mineral Point are very different than the others. The other intersections had 2 observers, whereas this intersection had 16 Memorial High School driver's ed students making observations, each student assigned to observe only one lane. Therefore, the numbers are higher than the other intersections. They only observed for 30 minutes, which also makes it difficult to compare to the other intersections. However, when you compare the pre-campaign observations with those observations during the campaign, there was a reduction in the red light running. However, there were still 50 red light running observations made in a 30-minute period when there were 18 students and two adults making observations, signs posted, a police car issuing citations (4 citations for red or yellow signals) and a TV camera person and reporter present.

No reductions or very slight reductions were shown in locations with only signs and no enforcement (Park & Badger) or when the enforcement took place before or after the observation time (Midvale & Mineral Point).

See Appendix 5 for a summary comparison chart.

The signs seemed to raise awareness about police presence and citation enforcement at intersections, which together resulted in changed behavior and safer driving.

See Appendix 6 for Stop on Red photos.

What Was Observed **AFTER** the Campaign Was Over?

Unfortunately, when the signs came down and there was no police presence, the numbers of red light running violations went up again to the pre-campaign levels. Although the Stop on Red Campaign [signs combined with police enforcement] resulted in fewer drivers running red lights during the campaign, it did not last over time.

WHAT DID PEOPLE THINK OF THE CAMPAIGN?

People do seem to recognize that red light running is a problem in our community, according to a survey issued by Channel 3 on its Website. Results checked on the evening of July 29 revealed that 70 % of those that responded (205) see it all the time. *See Appendix 7 for a copy of the Channel 3000 website article and survey.* People interviewed by the TV stations during

the campaign indicated that they realized the dangers, especially those that have suffered the consequences of someone else's poor judgement.

The comments received from the public, during the time of observations, were very positive toward the campaign. People were glad to see that this was being done and felt that the signs should stay up longer. However, these are the people that are already driving cautiously. The biggest challenge is convincing those who don't that they are putting their own lives and those of others in jeopardy.

CONCLUSIONS

The Stop on Red Campaign was found to be effective on the short term. However, a more sustained effort on the part of the Safe Community Coalition partners, including law enforcement and the media, is needed to achieve the goal of a true reduction in property damage and injury from red light running.

Running red lights, whether it turns red before the driver reaches the intersection or before the driver exits (light turns red before driver is $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through intersection), continues to be a problem. A multi-faceted approach, with broad-based education, is needed. This should include some way of consistently reminding drivers the following:

- Running red lights can be very dangerous.
- Running red lights is a cause of many crashes and injuries.
- Slow down, instead of speeding up at intersections, so one can stop on red.
- Chances are high that red light running violations can result in citations and fines.
- Be very cautious at intersections when the light turns green and proceed slowly to protect yourself.