

September 21, 2012

News Release

*For Immediate Release*

### **Warning for Fall Sun Glare**

This time of the year, there are two significant problems that can affect the visibility of motorists.

The first issue is the dew and moisture that develops on car windows when the temperatures cool down overnight on a car that is parked outside.

“We have had several very cool overnight temperatures already and drivers need to take the time necessary to clean their windows and ensure that the car has warmed up to ensure good visibility,” said Mandy Büttgen, Senior Engineering Technician for the City’s Public Works Department.

Further, visibility is currently also affected by the sun glare, especially when traveling eastbound early in the morning or westbound in the late afternoon, Büttgen says.

With the change from summer to fall (around Sept. 21), and then again with the change to spring (around March 21), the sun is almost directly in an east-west alignment which astronomers call “equinox”.

“Motorists must exercise special caution within a couple of weeks either side of these dates as the sun then causes it to be especially difficult to see traffic signal indications, tail lights and vehicles in general,” she said. Further, special attention needs to be paid to see bicycles, motorcycles and pedestrians when blinded by the sun.

For these two time periods around the equinox, crash data suggests that there are about 40 more crashes on Springfield roads, than in an average four-week period throughout the year. About 40 % of all “sun glare” related crashes fall into a four-week period around these seasonal transitions.

About 90% of those crashes in that particular spring or fall period, occur two hours after sunrise and two hours before sunset, because during this time of day the glare is very intense. Unfortunately the peak of this phenomena falls right into the morning rush hour when people drive to work or drop their kids off at school.

To help motorists with the visibility of traffic signals, the Traffic Engineering Division utilizes LED lights for the signals, which are seen better during low sun. Also, back plates have been installed on all east-west facing signal heads to help shield the sun when it is behind the signal and improve visibility.

Public Works offers the following additional safe driving tips:

- Glare obstructs vision just like fog. Slow down. And if you can't see, don't drive. Find a place where you can wait for a few minutes without being a hazard to anyone.
- If the sun is directly behind you, make sure the traffic signal ahead is really green and not just reflecting the sun light, then proceed.
- Keep your windshield clean on the inside and outside and have a pair of quality sunglasses with polarized lenses handy. Those are designed to cut through glare.

#### Springfield Traffic Crash Report Card (Jan. 1 – June 30)

The Public Works Department has also released the [June 2012 Crash Report Card](#) for Crashes from Jan. 1 through June 30. There have been 13 fatality crashes (killing 16 people) this year compared to four fatality crashes in the sametime period in 2011. The number of total crashes has decreased by 5% and the number of injury crashes has decreased 7% respectively compared to the sameperiod last year.

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