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7 deaths in '07 prompt pedestrian safety push

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Alarmed by the seven pedestrian fatalities so far this year, Honolulu police launched a major new push yesterday to warn people about the dangers of ignoring laws designed to protect those walking on the street.

The effort will involve teams of officers fanning out across the island to issue warnings and citations to pedestrians and drivers who flout the law.

Several people interviewed yesterday, however, doubted that it would make more than a dent in the problem.

"Giving them tickets might just make people more impatient and aggressive," said Adeleine Camiyama, who waited in a wheelchair to cross Punchbowl Street. "I don't know if it will help, but you've got to do something to change people's attitude."

Camiyama said increasing the walk time at traffic signals would be a better solution. "Right now, I can't even make it halfway across the street before the light turns red," she said.

Cheryl Torres, whose mother was killed by a hit-and-run driver in Nanakuli last year, said even more needs to be done.

"Until everybody changes, it's just going to be the same thing. People are racing up and down the streets, and they won't even stop when they hit someone like my mother. How can you hit someone and just keep going? I get sick every time I think about it."



From left, Betty Evans, Leona Pereza and Tessie Lilker hold a sign on the corner of King and Punchbowl directed at passing motorists.

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Police Chief Boisse Correa said yesterday officers will issue new printed warnings to those who jaywalk, cross against a traffic light or drive through an intersection when pedestrians are present.

"We're going to see if we can do something to help end this crisis," Correa said.

The effort follows other initiatives launched this year to address pedestrian deaths and injuries, including a state public awareness campaign and calls for stricter penalties for violating the state's crosswalk law.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann, about a dozen police officers and representatives of AARP-Hawai'i stood on the corner of Punchbowl and King streets yesterday afternoon to announce the new effort, which Correa said could end up being similar to a task force assembled last year to attack speeding on Honolulu roads. That effort resulted in more than 17,000 speeding citations and 1,000 arrests, Correa said.

Seven pedestrians have been killed on O'ahu in traffic accidents this year, bringing the number of pedestrian fatalities across the state since 2000 to 240 people, officials said yesterday. At least two more people were injured in pedestrian accidents yesterday.

Yesterday's accidents occurred about an hour apart in urban Honolulu.

In the first accident, a middle-aged woman was struck about 8:58 a.m. by a HandiVan at the intersection of Queen and Bishop streets. About 9:52 a.m., a 43-year-old man was hit by a car near Dillingham Boulevard and Kokea Street.

Both victims were taken to The Queen's Medical Center in serious condition, according to the city Office of Emergency Services.

There was good news on the pedestrian front yesterday: An 85-year-old woman who was struck by a car in Kahuku on Wednesday has been released from a hospital and is expected to make a full recovery, her daughter said. Lillian Au, who was hit in a marked crosswalk near the the Ko'olauloa Community Health and Wellness Center, was released from the hospital the next day, her daughter, Catherine Kealoha, said.

She is recuperating at the home of a daughter-in-law, Kealoha said, adding that neighbors have decided to sign a petition asking for a traffic control light at the crosswalk where her mother was struck.

"We need a streetlight there because so many guys dying already," Kealoha said. "I don't want her crossing the road already. I'm thankful she's getting better. I pray for my mom every night."

Advertiser staff writer Eloise Aguiar contributed to this report.

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