

THE TRIBUNE

MAKING A DIFFERENCE...DAILY



Wellanders are being asked to Think and Drive today and every day as part of a new campaign aimed at raising awareness and changing driver behaviour to reduce the number of fatalities on Niagara roadways. From left are campaign partners Linda Beyer, chair of the Regional Niagara Road Safety Committee, Darcy Anger, Welland Hydro billing supervisor, and Bill Auchterlonie, Welland Safe Communities Partnership chair. Information on the campaign will be inserted with hydro bills in an attempt to get the word out.

STAFF PHOTO/Maggie Riopelle

Think and Drive initiative gears up; program aims to get people to keep their minds on their driving

Posted By **MAGGIE RIOPELLE** ~ Saturday, December 15, 2007

Niagara has one of the highest rates of serious and fatal collisions per capita in the province.

But drivers here can make a difference.

Making roads safer in Niagara starts with you - so motorists are being encouraged today and every day to Think and Drive.

Through a partnership between the Welland Safe Community Partnership (WSCP), Welland Hydro and Regional Niagara Road Safety Committee (RNRSC), the Think and Drive program has been launched here.

"The Welland Safe Community Partnership has been a tremendous partner helping to get Think and Drive messages out to the local community," said RNRSC chair Linda Beyer.

"Welland Hydro is showing their support by inserting Think and Drive informational flyers into hydro bills. Grassroots community support is most important to encourage drivers to participate in the campaign and ultimately make Niagara roads safer."

In Niagara, drivers can use all the help they can get. Speed, impairment and driver error are the three main causes of serious and fatal accidents in Niagara.

"It's about changing the culture of how people drive," said WSCP chair Bill Auchterlonie. Most collisions occur in Niagara on rural roads, Auchterlonie said, which is the reason this campaign was originally piloted in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

He said some of the common reasons for collisions on rural roads include speeding, lack of signalling and running stop signs. The Think and Drive campaign in the new year will be launched across Niagara. Auchterlonie said he felt it was important to get the message out early and as often as possible here.

"Nearly all of these 'accidents' are avoidable," said Auchterlonie. "By us adding the extra message, we expect the message will help raise consciousness and awareness of accidents here."

The campaign's goals are to increase awareness about Niagara's high rate of collisions and about road safety, as well as changing driver attitudes and behaviours.

One of the main objectives is to get people to stop and think about what they are doing when they are behind the wheel.

People are encouraged to learn more at www.thinkanddrive.net where they can participate in the Niagara road challenge to evaluate their own personal driving behaviour in relation to these risks.

There is also additional information on the safe communities website at <http://welland.safecommunities.ca> or on Facebook at www.facebook.com - Think and Drive Niagara - where residents can voice their road safety concerns and experiences.

"The main goal of WSCP is to identify, support and promote existing injury prevention initiatives in our community in partnership with members and community resources," said Auchterlonie.

"Clearly, partnering to enhance the delivery of the Think and Drive campaign is a perfect fit with our goals."

The Think and Drive campaign did show positive results in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Auchterlonie hopes the message will get through to drivers here.

There is a road collision map on the Think and Drive website that shows where all the fatal accidents occurred in 2006.

In 2006, there were more than 6,000 motor vehicle collisions in Niagara and more than 90 of these were serious or fatal.

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