

## **TRAFFIC AND SAFETY INFORMATIONAL SERIES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION #14**

### **Wouldn't installing a four-way stop reduce accidents at an intersection?**

Adding four-way stop signs may seem like it would slow drivers down and make the streets safer, but additional stop signs do not necessarily increase safety. In fact, in some cases, especially when they are not really needed, the overuse of signs can lead to them being ignored by drivers. Therefore, traffic engineers make careful decisions concerning the use of four-way stop signs. Here are some of the factors they consider:

#### **Too many signs can lead to ineffectiveness**

Studies have shown that when stop signs are placed at intersections where they are not really needed, some motorists become careless about stopping. Moreover, overuse of four-way stop signs can contribute to the number of frustrated and impatient drivers on the streets, and these drivers may start driving recklessly.

#### **Where four-way stop signs are used**

Four-way stop signs are often used at the intersection of two roadways that contain similar traffic volumes. The intersection must, however, meet at least one of the following conditions:

- a traffic signal is going to be installed and the intersection needs a temporary solution to control the traffic;
- within 12 months at least five crashes have occurred at the intersection that could have been prevented by stop signs;
- relatively high volumes and/or high major-street vehicle speeds exist.

#### **Other solutions may provide just as much safety**

To make travel efficient and safe, four-way stop signs are usually installed only where they are absolutely necessary. Before four-way stop signs are installed, other solutions should be considered. Here are a few examples:

- Relocate the line where vehicles stop to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Limit the number of driveways in close proximity to an intersection since unexpected movements to/from these driveways sometimes cause drivers to suddenly stop or swerve, resulting in crashes.
- Install flashing lights before or at the intersection to warn drivers or to supplement existing stop signs, respectively.
- Install roadway lighting to reduce the frequency of crashes at night.

#### **For more information**

For more information, please contact \_\_\_\_\_.