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Traffic decoy helps promote pedestrian safety in Fort Lee

[Kristie Cattafi](#), North Jersey Record Published 8:22 a.m. ET Sept. 20, 2018 | Updated 5:00 p.m. ET Sept. 20, 2018



(Photo: Tariq Zehawi/NorthJersey.com)

FORT LEE — Borough police issued 20 tickets in four hours on Friday to motorists who failed to stop for pedestrians in an effort to help quell the increase in pedestrian fatalities across the state.

Violators of the "stop and stay stopped" law could face a \$200 fine and have two points put on their driving license.

To catch the motorists, borough officers performed a "pedestrian decoy" when school ended that resulted in 20 failure to stop for pedestrian tickets, Capt. Matthew Hintze said.

The decoy, an officer dressed in plain clothes trying to cross the street, lasted from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Palisade Avenue and Whiteman Street — an intersection that is near an elementary school, preschool and middle school.

"We wanted it to coincide with children getting out of school and when there are more pedestrians walking," Hintze said.

Before the law changed in 2010, New Jersey drivers were allowed to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk, but now they must come to a complete stop and wait for the person to completely cross the road.



In this on Friday, Oct. 31, 2014 file photo, Detective Edward Young, dressed as a duck, serves as a decoy for drivers who fail to stop for pedestrians on Hudson Terrace in Fort Lee. (Photo: Marko Georgiev/NorthJersey.com)

The law was changed due to the rising rate of pedestrian deaths, and since then police departments throughout the state have run decoy operations.

The borough's most famous decoy was during Halloween a couple of years ago when an officer dressed as Donald Duck to perform the decoy.

According to the state police, there have been 107 pedestrians involved in a fatal crash in the state compared to 184 last year.

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Two pedestrians were killed this week in Bergen County. On Tuesday morning, an Elmwood Park man was struck and killed by a car outside a 7-Eleven on Broadway. And Wednesday morning, a 42-year-old Garfield man died from his injuries from a hit-and-run accident on Monday night where he was left lying in the street.

New Jersey has also been identified as a "focus" state by the National Highway Traffic Administration due to its high fatality rates with pedestrians and bicyclists.

The National Highway Traffic Administration listed New Jersey with a pedestrian fatality rate that is double the national average.

James Sinclair, project coordinator for the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, said benefits of being designated as a focus state means more federal funding that helps pay for studies and decoys like the one Fort Lee performed.

Cyndi Steiner, executive director with the NJ Bike and Walk Coalition, said the state's high fatality statistics are especially concerning for the group.

"Right now, the state put pedestrian safety towards the bottom of the priority list," Steiner said. "We want the state to come up with a plan to get us to zero and right now there isn't one."

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