

Aggressive I-20/59 drivers targeted

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

The Interstate 20/59 corridor between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham is one of the most heavily traveled roads in the state.

State troopers call it a “hotspot” — a section of interstate where accidents involving commercial vehicles often occur because of dangerous driving habits.

Troopers will saturate the area for the rest of June, looking to ticket people who are speeding, following too closely or making improper lane changes. It’s part of a safety initiative called TACT: Ticketing Aggressive Cars and Trucks.

“Our ultimate goal is to prevent fatal traffic crashes,” said Trooper John Reese, a spokesman for the Department of Public Safety’s Highway Patrol Division. “Fatal crashes were down 12 percent between 2007 and 2008. Programs like this play a critical role in reducing those crashes.”

More than 80 percent of fatal crashes involving a personal vehicle and a truck were caused by drivers of personal vehicles, he said.

On Wednesday morning, members of the department’s Motor Carrier Safety Compliance Unit patrolled the interstate between Tuscaloosa and the Jefferson County line. They wrote four tickets in about an hour and a half, mostly for people driving more than 80 miles per hour in the 70 mile per hour zone.

The troopers were in Chevrolet Tahoes, with the “Alabama State Trooper” emblem on the right side. The emblem wasn’t visible to drivers in the middle or outer lanes, but the vehicles were clearly law enforcement vehicles, with tall radar antennas and license tags that read “State Trooper.” Vehicles sped around the troopers. One woman was stopped because she was speeding and following the driver ahead of her too closely.

Cpl. L.W. Capps said that drivers will even follow troopers too closely.

“You’d think that they would notice the “State Trooper” on the license tag when they’re only half a car length behind you,” he said.

The Alabama Department of Transportation and the Alabama Trucking Association have partnered with the Department of Public Safety to educate motorists about the TACT program, using posters, billboards and displays on commercial vehicles.

The University of Alabama’s Center for Advanced Public Safety is conducting pre- and post-initiative analysis of serious and fatal crashes involving commercial vehicles to help guide future enforcement in the area and to gauge the effectiveness of the initiative, Reese said.

Alabama is one of just 15 states that has received federal funding from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to perform a TACT detail. TACT began as a pilot program in Washington state in 2004.

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