



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Smith Chief Deputy

Law of the Month

Once again this month I am going to deviate from the normal statutes for the law of the month. Last month we discussed certain laws of physics that come into play in traffic crashes, especially when they occur in rural areas where speed is almost always a factor. This month I would like to discuss the **Law of Unintended Consequences**. There are probably numerous official definitions but essentially we are talking about unintended consequences that occur as a result of purposeful actions or decisions by a person.

In November, the Dodge County Sheriff's Office kicked off its crash reduction initiative in response to a spike in traffic fatalities thus far in 2017. This is a long-term, problem solving effort to try to address the root causes present in many of the crashes we see. We have set an ambitious goal of a 25-50% reduction in fatal crashes in the year 2018. We are looking at everything we do on a daily basis to try to find areas where we can improve our efficiency and effectiveness so we can provide better public value to the public we serve.

The problem is when researching crash reduction strategies, we find that some contributing factors we have little or no control over. Many of those contributing factors can only be controlled by each individual driver. No one decides to go out and get in a crash, yet crashes occur multiple times a day in Dodge County. This is where the **Law of Unintended Consequences** comes in.

We are running a little late for work or an appointment so we pick up our speed a little bit. We are very busy so we make phone calls or text while we are driving. We become lackadaisical about coming to a complete stop and looking both ways with diligence so we start rolling through stop signs. We want to go out and have fun with our friends so we have a few drinks, thinking we are not having "that much."

Then the unintended consequence happens. Maybe it was your fault and now you are facing civil or criminal liabilities. Maybe it wasn't your fault but your vehicle is damaged none the less, causing inconvenience and money out of your pocket. Or, as has happened too often this year, you or one of your loved ones will never be going home again.

The Dodge County Sheriff's Office is asking that everyone make the conscious choice to:

- Drive the speed limit
- Don't drive impaired
- Don't allow yourself to drive distracted
- Stop completely at all stop signs and signals
- Share this information with those you love