

The Swedish Police Traffic Supervision Policy – Road safety Community policing

Local police activities and general national strategy (from Swedish National Police Board)

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Summary

The Swedish Police have worked successfully together with local traffic accident prevention organisations and the National Road Administration (Vagverket) to reduce the number of deaths and the number of seriously injured on the Swedish roads. Still There are hundreds of road deaths every year and thousands of persons are seriously injured.

The Police accident prevention measures are of the greatest importance to reduce the number of accidents and by that the number of injured and killed persons.

The Police put an effort in development in order to achieve:

- The same level of activities in the whole country with national strategy and annual plan of action as a joint basis.
- A uniform way of working through the

Police methodology as to planning and followup as well as the carrying out of these activities according to the Police intelligence methodology.

- Increased number of controls that influence the conduct of the roadusers. They are carried out by all uniformed patrol police officers as a part of combating all types crime.
- More activities for the prevention of dangerous situations. It is important to increase cooperation as to the preventive activities within the police organisation as well as with external actors on a local, regional and national level.

”Vision Zero”

Sweden’s long- term road safety goal is that there should be no fatalities or serious injured in road traffic. This goal was ratified by the Swedish Parliament in 1997 and is based on the “Vision Zero” programme. This is a great challenge to all actors in the traffic area. The most important task for the Police to reach this goal is:

- Preventing dangerous situations and infractions of the regulations.
- Contributing to roadusers observing traffic regulations.

Desired development

To increase the capability of the Police as to road safety the whole police organisation shall work on the basis of a national strategy. The strategy is a longterm ambition and will be supplemented with annual plans that in a more tangible way and step by step will describe the work.

The aim and direction for the next five year period:

- **Increasing the Police efforts within the traffic sphere, from traffic supervision to community policing and accident prevention measures.**
- The level of ambition of the police authorities

as to the accident prevention measures shall be the same in the whole country and the police authorities shall work in a more uniform way.

• The efforts of the Police within the traffic sphere shall be a part of the other Police efforts as regards combating crime.

From traffic supervision to accident prevention measures

To take advantage of existing possibilities of development a wider approach than previously is required. The Police must to a greater degree think and work in terms of accident prevention measures and not only in terms of traffic supervision. It is for instance required that the Police work in a more preventive way - a work that is strengthened by cooperation within the police organisation and with other actors on national and local level.

Influencing conduct

A large number of controls and reporting violations, changes the drivers conduct in a positive way. Therefore the main task of the Police, as to the work regarding road safety is supervising, controlling and reporting traffic violations. Research demonstrates that police controls are effective if they are carried out in a correct way.

In order to handle the cases in a good way on the spot fine shall be used as much as possible. To make it possible to carry out more controls it is necessary that not only traffic patrol officers participate in the Police accident prevention measures. Also uniformed patrol police officers shall to a greater extent participate and control sobriety, speed, and use of safety belt. For certain tasks, like for instance control of vehicle condition, driving and rest periods and hazardous goods, special qualifications are required. Experts must for this reason exist in all police authorities - as a resource belonging to the own police authority or in cooperation with other police authorities.

Equivalent activities in the whole country

To be treated equally from a law and order point of view is a democratic right and the citizens expect the Police to maintain safety, security and order on the same level in the whole country.

For this reason it is of importance that the police accident prevention measures have a joint basis and are carried on according to the national strategy and the annual plans. It is also of importance to use the existing joint methods for operational planning, carrying out and followup.

The controls shall be carried out in a planned way and shall be based on intelligence as a part of the work with other ways of combating crime. **This means that police officers make controls during their shifts in combination with other tasks.**

Priority areas

There are four preferential spheres for the Police accident prevention measures:

- speed and aggressive driving
- sobriety (zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol)
- use of seat belt, car safety seat and helmet
- A part combating crime (discover other crimes than traffic violations)

Speed

Speed is crucial for the outcome of a traffic accident.

If everyone observed the speed limits, traffic researchers mean that 100 lives would be spared every year. Research also shows that if the average speed is lowered two kilometres an hour the number of traffic killed in accident will be reduced with ten percent every year.

One way of contributing to lowered average speed and increased road safety is lowering the reporting limit at speed controls. The Police will lower the reporting limit at controls to six kilometres an hour. This implies that a driver will be imposed a fine when he/she drives 76 kilometres an hour on a road where it is permitted to drive 70 kilometres an hour. The same limit shall be applied no matter what measuring method is used.

Aggressive driving implies a type of driving that harms the road safety of other persons. Aggressive driving involves a high risk of accidents and causes many serious accidents every year. The Police shall counteract aggressive driving by supervision and cooperation with external actors. Examples of aggressive driving: too short distance between vehicles, dangerous overtaking, no observance of red lights, and unlawful races.

Sobriety

A great part of the drivers that are involved in traffic accidents are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Some have a very high percentage of alcohol which is an indication of addiction. It is for this reason important that many field sobriety controls and drug tests (eye examination tests with help of a pupilometer and a small flashlight) are carried out. One of the goals is that the Police should carry out two million breath tests every year. To manage this it is necessary to carry out a test at every meeting with a driver in the traffic that has been initiated by a police officer.

In addition to the work with carrying out controls the Police shall cooperate in order to discourage addiction of alcohol and drugs. There are formalized networks between the Police, the social service, the public health and sick care service, the correctional care service and others throughout the whole country.

Protective equipment - safety belt, car safety seat and helmet

The safety belt is definitely the most important safety device in the car - in the front seat as well as in the backseat. Children need more protection in the car than adults to manage the impact of a collision.

Use of helmet can reduce the number of fatalities and injured persons in the traffic. Moped riders constitute a group with a low observance of the regulation relating to use of helmet.

Working for increased use of protective equipment is a rather simple measure that furthers road safety.

A part combating crime

Also criminal persons use the roads and there are strong connections between criminal activities and involvement in traffic accidents. More traffic controls leads to finding a larger number of criminal persons and revealing other crimes than traffic crimes. More controls also contribute to the fact that the Police will find more criminal persons and discover other crimes than traffic violations.

The intelligence information a police officer can obtain in connection with controls of vehicles and drivers can be a reason for taking further measures to investigate other crimes than traffic violations.

Ten years ago the Swedish National Police develop a national Drug Recognition Expert Training program (DRE) for our police officers. The aim of this training program is to teach policemen to recognize the signs and symptoms as to whether a person has come under the influence of some type of drug.

The DRE program is today an effective tool in the fight against narcotics and narcotics related crime. The police's work will include facilitating, amongst other things, the recognition of drug addiction at an early stage, keeping habitual drug addicts under control and persuading them to undergo voluntary treatment and showing young and potential narcotics users that the risk of detection is high.

Today this program also is very useful in preventing and detecting drugs in the traffic. Detecting drivers who are under influence of some type of drug, for example Cannabis, Cocaine, Heroin, Amphetamines and Ecstasy

Responsibility

The Police traffic accident prevention measures constitute a joint responsibility for the National Police Board and the police authorities. The National Police Board is responsible for strategically directing the work and coordinating the national operational management by operational necessary qualifications, annual plans and joint efforts.

The police authorities are responsible for turning the national strategy and plans into local plans and operational activities. Here it is important to emphasise that the chief commissioners of the county police departments and the operational management are responsible for the traffic accident prevention issues and not the traffic police chiefs as previously.