

# NEWS RELEASE

04/19/07

## WHATCOM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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### Whatcom County Sheriff's Office enforces "Tailgating" Law

Following too closely, or "tailgating", is a major contributor to crashes in Whatcom County. In response, the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office traffic unit is emphasizing the enforcement of the law prohibiting following too closely. This has resulted in 168 infractions issued for the violation during the past seven months.

In what has traditionally been a difficult violation to document, deputies have developed an effective solution. Focusing on the busier roads in the county, deputies enforce the law by timing the distance between vehicles with stopwatches. Their enforcement efforts have identified drivers leaving as little as 0.2 seconds between vehicles.

According to research, the average driver requires 1.5 seconds to respond to an unexpected traffic situation before reacting. The Department of Licensing recommends a following distance of 2 – 3 seconds when traveling at speeds of 30 mph or less, and 4 seconds at speeds greater than 30 mph. At a speed of 35 mph, it takes a driver 77 feet to come to a complete stop. Increasing the speed by 15 mph brings the stopping distance to 233 feet.

WCSO traffic unit deputies will continue their emphasis on targeting tailgaters. According to Traffic Sergeant Steve Gatterman, "We're making this a priority for our traffic unit because we've seen too many serious collisions caused by drivers following too closely." Motorists can expect to see ongoing enforcement of tailgating violations in Whatcom County.

Members of the media may contact Doug Dahl with questions. He can be reached at 360-398-2812.

This news release is also available in video and audio format at:  
[www.trafficsafetyinfo.com/html/media.html](http://www.trafficsafetyinfo.com/html/media.html)

The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office is located at 311 Grand Avenue in Bellingham, Washington. Office hours are week days from 8:30 Am to 4:30 PM - After hours calls should be directed to the What-Comm Dispatch Center in Bellingham at 676-6912, or **911 for Emergency Responses**.