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**June 4, 2025**

## Now Is the Time to Get Involved With the Illinois Traffic Safety Challenge

What is the main source of complaints received by your agency? With notable exceptions, the vast majority of agencies do not have unusually high concerns about serious crime, but **almost everyone gets complaints about speeding, or that everyone runs the red light at a certain intersection.**

The **Illinois Traffic Safety Challenge** is a friendly competition that encourages law enforcement agencies to prioritize traffic safety to reduce crashes and fatalities. By participating, agencies can focus on traffic safety initiatives, receive recognition for their efforts, and gain valuable insights into their effectiveness.

Far from a toasters-for-tickets focus, the Challenge requires an agency to address six major areas that together help to make streets safer for everyone. Applicants must show:

- Policies that cover impaired driving, speeding, distracted driving, and occupant restraint use strategies:
- Elaborate on training in these four areas, known to be the most common factors in serious injury and fatal traffic crashes.
- Public information and education-what are you doing to reach out to your community, to address issues before they become issues, how do you engage with the public.
- Recognition programs, both for your employees and for the community.
- Enforcement-when the time comes, how do you focus your efforts? Are they data-driven?

- Effectiveness-when you've done what you've done, what is the result? Have you made a positive impact?
- And finally, how do you document and present your efforts so that they can be compared to other agencies of your size and type?

Agencies are separated into categories based on their type (municipal, county, state, part-time, college/university, and "other"), and size. An agency of 10 full-time officers isn't competing with one carrying a staff of 150. A team of three judges from a variety of traffic safety backgrounds then evaluates each entry in their assigned category and compares it to its peers. Judges consider not only the size of the agency, but also the nature of its jurisdiction. A small, rural department may not have the resources of, or the ability to participate in activities as readily as a mid-size or large suburban department.

In addition to category entries, agencies can submit their efforts for consideration in a variety of specialized categories such as:

- Speed
- Distracted Driving
- Impaired Driving
- Occupant Protection
- Pedestrian/Bicycle
- Railroad Crossing Safety
- Teen Driving
- Commercial Vehicle
- Community Outreach

### **What is the benefit from participating?**

#### **Increased focus on traffic safety:**

Participating agencies are encouraged to develop comprehensive traffic safety programs, which can lead to improved enforcement, public education, and officer training.

#### **Public recognition:**

The challenge provides a platform for agencies to showcase their commitment to traffic safety and receive recognition for their accomplishments.

**Data-driven approach:**

The challenge encourages agencies to track and report their data, allowing them to identify areas for improvement and measure the effectiveness of their programs.

**Collaboration and knowledge sharing:**

The challenge provides a forum for agencies to share best practices and learn from each other's successes.

**Documentation of effectiveness:**

Participating agencies can document the impact of their traffic safety initiatives, demonstrating their effectiveness in reducing crashes and fatalities.

**Support for ongoing initiatives:**

The challenge helps agencies stay on track with their traffic safety efforts and track their overall effectiveness.

**Application:** The Illinois Traffic Safety Challenge has an online application. All the required information can be entered electronically.

Since its inception over 30 years ago, agencies participating in the Challenge have received hundreds of thousands of dollars in equipment and training thanks to the generosity of corporate partners and the Department of Transportation, and the on-going, essential support of the Illinois Chiefs.

Even if you aren't submitting an entry to the Challenge, there is a stand-alone program that doesn't require participation. If an officer/deputy/trooper makes an initial traffic stop solely for an occupant restraint/child restraint violation and discovers a significant crime, they can be nominated for a "Looking Beyond the Safety Belt" award. Additionally, if you know of someone deserving of recognition for a sustained, long-time, significant commitment to traffic safety, there is also an award called the "Highway Safety Leadership Award". This recognition is available to both sworn and civilian individuals.

There is some work involved in applying to the Challenge. But what we can tell you is that agencies that have participated often see the desired improvement in their overall traffic safety and besides, bringing home something free and possibly an award to share with your city/village/town board might just help you get the funding you need to continue this important work.

**When should I start?** The Illinois Traffic Safety Challenge is judged on efforts during the previous calendar year. If you are considering applying, you need to start documenting your agencies traffic safety effort NOW! This will ensure you have time to develop, organize and participate in activities that you can include in your application.

**Assistance:** The Illinois Traffic Safety Challenge aids any agency who is considering applying. The Traffic Safety Challenge Directors can assist with providing information, suggestions and application templates even if you are halfway through the current calendar year. This is in the form of in-person meetings, How To seminars and template application examples.

Additional information on the program can be found on the Traffic Challenge website at [www.iltrafficchallenge.org](http://www.iltrafficchallenge.org).

Questions can be referred to Director Scott Kristiansen, 847.456.2293 or [scottkilacp@gmail.com](mailto:scottkilacp@gmail.com), and Co-Director Paul Rizzo at 224.286.0102 or [prizzolel@gmail.com](mailto:prizzolel@gmail.com).