

Sobering reminder for drivers that Stop means Stop



Several recent crashes and near misses at the intersection of Aylesbury and Wards Road, as well as similar incidents around Selwyn, are a stark reminder that too many drivers still ignore obvious stop signs.

The Selwyn District Council has upgraded the signage at several high-risk intersections, including this five-point intersection near Burnham, but the recent crashes demonstrate that some drivers are still not paying attention, says Head of Operational Delivery Gareth Morgan.

“Most crash investigations and intersection observations show approaching drivers typically slow down but fail to actually stop. Or they stop, but fail to check the way is clear,” says Morgan.

Selwyn has many rural intersections where the approaches have an 80 or 100kmh speed limit, so any mistake can quickly turn deadly, or cause significant injuries.

The Selwyn District Council, in collaboration with NZTA and the emergency services, has been working hard over the past years to identify and upgrade the most dangerous intersections.

“Poor observation and judgement at intersections is the primary cause of intersection crashes, so drivers rush stop signs and make poor decisions and gap selection. The

amount of time saved by failing to stop at a stop sign is insignificant compared to the potential severity of the risk it creates.”

Senior Sergeant Vaughan Lapslie of Canterbury Highway Patrol and Serious Crash Unit reminds drivers that they do not only risk their own lives, but also that of other drivers and their passengers.

“Your passengers and other road users put their trust in you when you are driving. When you take a risk at an intersection, it is not only your life you are gambling with, but theirs as well. Is that second you are trying to save really worth the risk?” asks Lapslie.

“The sign means you have to stop. It’s the law, it’s not optional. Drivers have an obligation to be vigilant at all times when driving,” says the Senior Sergeant.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand volunteer and career crews are often among the first at a crash scene. Senior Station Officer at Christchurch City Station, Danny Carmine says every intersection crash has a ripple effect.

“Every crash is traumatic and doesn’t only affect the people involved. The emergency services who respond, witnesses, friends and families, are all affected as well. So, when you see a stop sign, make sure you come to a complete stop,” Carmine says.

Brendan McInnes, Hato Hone St John Mid-Canterbury Group Operations Manager, says their paramedics see first-hand the devastating impact of crashes, and deal with extremely traumatic injuries as a result.

“Don’t put our emergency responders in the unfortunate position of having to attend these easily preventable intersection crashes,” says McInnes, who adds that many accidents stem from driver inattention at intersections and in-car distractions.

“These crashes not only impact the people involved, but also the emergency services that respond,” says McInnes.

“Be extra vigilant at intersections, take the time to actually stop and ensure the way is clear. Don’t create bad driving habits that could take a life and create a ripple effect for others.”