

## Stop Signs

Have you ever asked “how does an accident occur at an intersection controlled by a stop sign?” The department investigates several incidents of collisions at just such locations. One would think that if each vehicle stopped as directed that there would be no chance of an accident. What we find is that often a driver did not notice the stop sign and proceeds through the intersection and strikes a vehicle that has already entered, or vehicles do a “tap and go” without first insuring the intersection is clear.

The question often gets asked, just who has the right of way or how is it supposed to work at a stop intersection? First, a stop is defined as a “complete cessation of movement (TCA 55-8-101[63])”. This means the vehicle comes to a complete stop – tires not moving. It does not include rolling stops, or slightly tap on pedal (S.T.O.P.), or right turns without first stopping. In the case of right of way at a stop intersection, if all directions of travel are controlled by a stop sign, then the vehicle arriving at the intersection first has the right of way. In the case of two or more vehicles arriving at the same time, then the vehicle to the immediate right should proceed. In some instances it might be necessary to make eye contact with another driver and use hand motions to insure it is understood who should proceed.

Regardless of who arrived first, or right of way, every driver should enter an intersection with care and be prepared to react to other vehicles. A complete stop contributes to the safe movement through an intersection. A violation for disregarding stop signs carry a fine of \$165 in city court – caution and patience can prevent a collision and costly assessments.