

From the Desk of Officer Marshall Morehead

Shopping, Shopping, and Shopping!

Shopping, shopping, and shopping! This is the time of year when shopping and trying to get that one special gift for a friend or loved one is on everyone's mind. As people fill the parking lots though, it seems like the real challenge is to find a parking spot. With hundreds of people filling the parking lots at the mall and stores out of town, let's take the opportunity to shop local and avoid some of the hassle.

I talk to the road patrol officers on a regular basis, and one of the topics they keep suggesting that I write about is the number of people that continue to park in Handicapped and Fire Lane parking. I know for some of us it is tempting to use those spots "because I'm just going to run in real quick", but let's remember who these spots are for. Not people who don't want to walk a little further, but for people who can't or have great difficulty walking. The state law states that only individuals who are handicapped may utilize these designated spaces. It goes on to state that a violator must be fined not less than five hundred dollars nor more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned for more than thirty days for each offence. Those reasons notwithstanding, the main reason to not park in these places is it's just the right thing to do and it allows those of us who need it the place to park.

Now parking in a fire zone is a horse of a different color. There is absolutely **no reason** to park in a fire zone and the law does not allow for any vehicle, other than emergency vehicles, to utilize these spaces. Let's go back to that "common sense" that I always speak of. Fire zones are placed close to entrances and near Fire Department Connection points (or FDC'S) so that the fire apparatus can hook into the water supply of the business. This is done for multiple reasons. 1) So we can bolster the sprinkler system already working inside to help save lives and minimize property damage before we make entry and 2) to allow Public Safety officers another option when attacking a fire within. If a vehicle is parked in front of an FDC or the entrance it limits our ability to fight that fire. The longer it takes to get set up the more damage (to life and property) can occur. The fine for parking in a fire zone can be as much as thirty five dollars.

Don't let something as simple as having to walk from the back of the parking lot keep you from enjoying your Christmas shopping, by having to pay for avoidable fines. Also let's keep those fire lanes clear just in case we need to use them to save your life or the life of someone you love. Thank you again for your time and for helping us to better serve you.