

CHP Corner: How to prevent collisions

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A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. This is a common metaphor used to describe how things can be linked together and dependent on one another in order to function properly.

Often times when I am at the scene of an accident, I use this metaphor to explain why the accident occurred. Most of the time traffic flows smoothly throughout Lake County. However, collisions do occur and when they do it can have a devastating affect on those involved.

When a driver becomes a weak link in the metaphoric chain of traffic, the chain can snap and a collision is the result. Drinking and driving causes an obvious weakening of the chain, but what other causes are there?

The speed of a vehicle can create a weak link in the chain of traffic. The difference in stopping distance for a vehicle traveling at 55 miles per hour compared to 60 miles per hour is approximately 38 feet. Following too closely has a similar affect on the chain as speeding does. It effectively reduces the three second rule, but that rule is designed to create a safety cushion under optimum driving conditions.

Straight and level roadways with a good sight distance are more the exception than the rule in our beautiful mountainous county. If you create a buffer between you and the car ahead longer than three seconds, you actually help to strengthen the chain against the weak link that may be ahead of you or behind you.

Driver complacency is a hidden cause of link weakening. When a driver has never had a collision, he or she begins to believe that they never will, and they begin to disregard the rules of the road.

Another weak link is created when a driver continues to drive while sleepy or fatigued when they should pull over and rest.

Next time you drive your car, take a few moments to critique your driving. Look around at the other vehicles on the road and see if you can tell who is the weak link on the road. If you're the weak link in the chain, it's time to improve your driving.

If we all try to strengthen our own individual links, it will have an overall positive effect on the traffic safety in our community.

If you have any questions about this article or ideas on future articles, contact myself or Officer Adam Garcia, Clear Lake Area CHP. Remember, buckle up and drive safe!

Officer Humble has been a California Highway Patrol Officer for 17 years, and has been assigned to the Clear Lake CHP office for the past 11 years.

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