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Union acts to protect troopers from car fires

Albany -- PBA president advises no highway stops except in emergencies

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The union for State Police troopers is advising its members not to stop on highways for non-emergencies -- apparently including routine tickets.

In an unprecedented move, the State Troopers PBA President Daniel M. De Federicis is advising members to take steps to minimize the chances of accidents with their Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor vehicles, several of which have had fires after rear-end crashes.

De Federicis is also calling on officers to reject the State Police's "illegal imposition of ticket quotas and to ensure they put their own safety first."

He said the action is necessary to protect troopers "in light of four more CVPI fuel-fed fires in the month of May that resulted from rear-end collisions."

Two of those fires killed two troopers in other states, raising the number of police officers who have died in burning CVPIs since 1983 to 16, he said.

Since the fire problem became known, the state has installed fuel tank shields in every Crown Victoria patrol car. It has also set up a committee to research and report on fire suppression devices, equipment storage and other safety issues.

De Federicis said the advisory will likely be taken to heart by his members. He does not suggest a work stoppage, but recommends setting up radar devices near spots like service areas so that motorists can be ticketed well away from traffic.

PBA Troop G Delegate Jeffrey J. Kayser said that in light of the Crown Victoria problem, "the time has come to limit (troopers') exposure sitting on the shoulder of the road writing tickets that may not be immediately necessary.

"Make the cars safe and then the troopers can resume their tasks of vehicle and traffic law enforcement," he said.

Lt. Glenn Miner, a State Police spokesman, said he is sure troopers will continue providing first-rate responses and service. Meanwhile, he said, the state will "work tirelessly to examine all areas which may improve the safety of the patrol vehicles and highway vehicle stops."

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