

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Driving a message home with an optical illusion

BY REBECCA UNDELL VANCOUVER

It's already on the big screen, but now a 3D image is being used on the streets of West Vancouver in an attempt to jolt reckless drivers into reality.

Motorists travelling on 22nd Street in West Vancouver will be confronted with a 3D image of a little girl chasing a ball in the street starting next Tuesday. The girl will be an optical illusion, but the scenario is very real, according to David Dunne of the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation.

"We need to expect the unexpected because anything could happen, whether it is a 3D image on the road... or whether it's a live child or a dog running in front of the car, these are all things that we have to be able to control for in a vehicle," he said.

The foundation is partnering with Preventable, a safety advocacy group, and the District of West Vancouver to install Canada's first ever 3D image aimed at driver safety.

The display, which costs \$15,000 to run, will be installed in a school zone on



The City of West Vancouver and Preventable are attempting to curb reckless driving by frightening motorists with a 3D image of a small girl who leaps into traffic in a school zone.

22nd Street, just north of Inglewood Avenue, and very close to École Pauline Johnson Elementary School. It will be in place for one week.

The 3D image will look like an indistinguishable mark from far away, but by the time the driver is within 30 metres, the image of the girl and ball will become clear.

"You'll see this image start to rise off the pavement and it

will look like a little child is crossing the street. As you get closer to the image, the image recedes into the pavement," Mr. Dunne said.

The back-to-school season was chosen because September and October are the months that see the most child fatalities, Mr. Dunne said. Plus, parents are often the worst offenders, speeding, pulling u-turns and talking on

cellphones, he said.

The key to prevention is changing attitudes, according to Mr. Dunne. The image is meant to provide a surprising physical reminder that drivers need to have an attitude of safety and caution.

Traditional safety messaging just does not seem to be getting the job done, according to both Mr. Dunne and the District of West Vancouver.

"It's been an ongoing challenge for traffic-safety engineers to try and get vehicles to slow," said Brent Dozzi, manager of roads and transportation. "The static messaging that we do becomes part of the landscape and it's on the periphery."

The city has also planned some safety parameters around the 3D image, which adds another potential distraction for drivers.

Mr. Dozzi said the drivers will be able to tell something is on the road at a far distance and will have enough time to stop safely when they realize it is an image of a little girl – if they are travelling at the posted speed limit of 30 km/h.

The city and Preventable will also have a sign notifying drivers that there is a traffic safety program ahead, he said. The West Vancouver Police, who support the initiative, will also be on hand to patrol the area.

Drivers should be driving defensively at all times, said Mr. Dozzi. "As a driver, pay attention and drive like a ball, or a car pulling out of a side street, or a child could run out on the road at any given time."

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