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# Dream Cruise policing moves on two wheels

## Nimble motorcycles best for Woodward festivities, police say

Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News

*Royal Oak* -- Watch the lanes of Woodward Avenue the day of the Dream Cruise and you'll see a sight unlike any other: 1 million car fans and 40,000 classic cars jammed together the length of the boulevard, moving fast as molasses.

It seems impossible for law enforcement and emergency medical vehicles to move up and down the clogged avenue.

Yet after a decade of cruises, police have mastered their domain -- via the heavens, a fleet of motorcycles and the grassy Woodward median.

To manage thick crowds and miles of bumper-to-bumper traffic and respond to emergencies, a police helicopter manned by the Oakland County Sheriff's Office sweeps over Woodward, snapping photos and downloading information to a mobile command center staffed by officers from more than 30 agencies working the Cruise.

From there, police commanders make decisions on where officers are needed the most. Convoys of motorcycle cops use the middle of Woodward to roam up and down 13-plus miles from Ferndale to Pontiac, responding to calls.

"We can move assets quickly by having literally a bird's eye view," said Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard, whose department sends more than 200 deputies to work the Cruise.

"They beam their signal to the mobile command center and we move people."

Royal Oak Police Chief Chris Jahnke said his department, which coordinates patrol, took over the median a few years ago.

"The motorcycles are so mobile. They can move someone so fast when traffic is backed up a

mile. They use the median. Everyone knows it's ours. If they don't, we move them off," Jahnke said.

In fact, many motorcycle cops travel to Oakland County to volunteer for motor duty for the event because it's a great training ground for motorcycle policing, Jahnke said.

"For the officers, this is the best motorcycle training you can get -- you are constantly making split-second decisions with the cars all around you, and you are jumping curbs to respond to calls when traffic is backed up. The median is our freeway. The motorcycle cops love coming here," Jahnke said.

Members of the Sheriff's auxiliary unit, mounted and bike patrol also provide help for the popular event. On Cruise day the department has had as many as 145 deputies on the ground, in the air and on motorcycles. Bouchard mounts a motorcycle for Saturday, the big day.

Once the decision has been made that the cruise is over and it's time to empty Woodward, officers and deputies can clear the road in 30 minutes, Bouchard said, primarily due to motorcycles pushing traffic off onto the major mile roads.

The focus for law enforcement will be the same this year -- alcohol-related activities. No booze in cars, no walking around Woodward with open cups of alcohol and no drunken driving.

"Our goal is not to write violations but to get compliance," Jahnke said. "This is our opportunity to show off our community policing. This is a family event."

"Considering the size of the event, people are behaving. We had a dozen tickets last year with 1.5 million people. That's not a bad rate," he said.

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