

FHP cracking down on drivers who cut into I-95 express lanes



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State cracking down on drivers who dodge between I-95 express lane poles in Miami-Dade.

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A crackdown is coming for those who treat the Interstate 95 express lanes like a giant slalom course.

The Florida Highway Patrol is putting more troopers on the road to go after "lane-divers," people who dodge between — or plow through — the plastic poles that separate the express lanes from other traffic. Offenders face a \$179 fine plus three points against their driver's licenses.

Trooper Joe Sanchez said problems on I-95 in Miami-Dade usually start when one set of lanes is backed up and the other is zipping along. Drivers who are stopped, whether in the express lanes or the free lanes, seize the opportunity to dart into the other lanes, and that sometimes leads to crashes.

The campaign, called Drive Safe 95 Express, will continue through June.

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There are 7,000 poles separating the express lanes on a 7-mile stretch of I-95 from the Golden Glades interchange to I-395. But they are constantly being run over, with more than 500 replaced every week at a cost of about \$1 million a year.

The express lanes are being extended north from the Golden Glades interchange to Broward Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale, where 14,000 more poles with a sturdier design are being installed. In addition, the buffer between the express and free lanes is a little wider, which engineers believe will lead to fewer poles being hit.

The narrow shoulders in Miami-Dade mean if you are caught lane diving, troopers usually have to follow you to either the Golden Glades park-and-ride lot or downtown Miami to find enough room to safely pull you over.

"There is no ticket worth anybody's life, not a trooper or a motorist. Troopers need to make that stop at a safe location," Sanchez said. "People think that we aren't making traffic stops out there. But we are, and we will continue to do so."

Officials say the campaign will be similar to enforcement efforts launched in 2014 to counter aggressive driving on Krome Avenue, a narrow road in western Miami-Dade where dozens of people have been killed in crashes over the years.

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