

From email dated September 8, 2007

bulverde753@satx.rr.com wrote:

Guys,

We need to have sit down talk apparently about activity on your shift.

Both of your activity sheets were kicked back showing a lack of traffic enforcement from both of you.

Problem 1:

Traffic Enforcement is listed as 3 or 4 or 5 hours and only one warning is being turned in. Or in another case no traffic enforcement is listed at all.

Your activity is being checked by Admin and something needs to change.

Next week I have to adjust my time and hours on my days off so I can come and ride out with each of you... So make plans, and get your ticket books ready because guess what we will be doing all night.

Extra info:

If you have an open door that you located on patrol it is a CFS on your activity sheet. Please do not list this type of call as Criminal Investigation (CI). You located the open door in most cases (CFS.) You were not dispatched to a burglary which would be a (CI). Only example I can come up with right now.

Thank you both.

See you next week

Sgt Vera

the reply:

Sgt Vera,

Thank you for the email. I always welcome good advice on how I can be a better officer.

I have a few questions. You wrote that you are confused as to how an officer can show 3 or 4 hours of traffic enforcement and produce no tickets from that. The explanation is pretty simple, actually. There have been several nights lately where I have been observing traffic and saw no violations. We have had several nights where it rained all night long, making traffic extremely light, and slow moving. Thankfully, there were no accidents due to the rain. There have been other nights where it is literally dead, and no moving traffic at all. I have sat on Hwy 281 for over an hour on a monday night, and never seeing a car over 60 mph.

My other question is that after reading your email, you seem to make it clear that I am not writing enough tickets. What is the correct number? It would seem to me that the correct number of traffic stops would be the number of traffic violations observed. I appreciate the fact that you are willing to adjust your schedule to ride with me. Again, I am always enthusiastic about training that will make me a better officer. However I do not plan on compromising my ethical standards on probable cause for a traffic stop. I am looking forward to your response to this. I will say that you should choose your words wisely.

You know the traffic code very well, and I'm sure you are familiar with the wording in 720.002 which states, "A political subdivision or an agency of this state may not establish or maintain, formally or informally, a plan to evaluate, promote,

compensate, or discipline a peace officer according to the officer's issuance of a predetermined or specified number of any type or combination of types of traffic citations"

You once told me that another officer (who is not here anymore) was lazy because he did not write as many tickets as you wanted him to. I know that many officers look at the number of tickets they write as some sort of frivolous competition. If we are to evaluate how good an officer is by how many tickets he writes, I think we are missing the big picture, and doing a severe disservice to the people in the community.

I sincerely hope that you do not think that Officer Edwards or I am lazy. We check our buildings, we patrol the neighborhoods, and we cover each other. My objective at the beginning of my shift is not to write x number of tickets. My objective is to go home at the end of my tour, and make sure that my fellow officers go home. The number of traffic stops will always equal the number of violations observed.

I like to think that someday we can better evaluate officers by how they treat people. But there is no box on the activity sheet to measure units of kindness. No way to put on a spreadsheet the counseling that we gave a 16 yr old kid with a drug problem, or trying to console a woman who has just lost her husband.

I will have my ticket book ready. I will also have my ethical standards on probable cause for traffic stops clearly in mind. I'm looking forward to seeing you.

Have a great day, and Be Careful out there.