

# Study: Speeding Florida Cops Caused At Least 320 Traffic Crashes, 19 Deaths Since 2004

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MIAMI, FL—According to a recent investigation conducted by the South Florida Sun Sentinel, “Police officers sworn to uphold our traffic laws are among the worst speeders on South Florida roads.” Sun Sentinel researchers spent three months analyzing SunPass toll records to find out how long it took police officers—both on and off-duty—to travel from one toll plaza to the next. In doing so, study researchers were able to determine how fast a lot of South Florida cops (i.e. Florida Highway Patrol troopers, county sheriff’s deputies and city police officers) are really driving.

The Sun Sentinel’s probe has since spurred ALL South Florida police agencies to conduct their own internal investigations as a means of determining which of their officers had justification for traveling at excessive speeds (i.e. responding to an emergency call) and which officers were abusing their authority (i.e. driving home from work.)

By evaluating SunPass toll records, Sun Sentinel investigators found evidence of excessive speed (traveling 90 to 130 mph on heavily trafficked highways such as Interstate 95 and Florida’s Turnpike) in 793 toll transponders issued to South Florida police officers. The report noted that many of the speeding police officers were off-duty at the time. Margate Police Chief Jerry Blough appeared to explain that it is a “blatant violation of public trust” when police officers speed under circumstances in which excessive speed is unwarranted and/or unsafe.

The investigation also found that speeding police officers have been responsible for no less than 320 crashes and 19 [traffic fatalities](#). Mind you, only one of those speeding cops was sentenced to jail time (60 days).

For instance, Erskin Bell Jr.—a college student from South Florida— suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in a Central Florida crash involving a police officer who was reportedly traveling at speeds of 104 mph at the time. Reports noted that it was not the first time that particular cop crashed his cruiser while on-duty. The crash victim’s father, Erskin Bell Sr., told reporters, “Had this officer’s behavior been dealt with, maybe he would not have run into our son.”

Within a span of 13 months, cops from Miami-Dade County to Palm Beach County were said to have been

involved in 5,100 “high-speed incidents.” A whopping 96 percent of those officers were traveling between 90 and 110 mph when the said incidents occurred. Additionally, more than 50 percent of those speed-related occurrences/accidents involved officers who were not in their jurisdictions.

According to Plantation Police Detective Robert Rettig, “If we have officers who are not responding to an emergency and they’re driving to or from work at 100 mph, I have a problem with that, and so does the chief... If an officer is found in violation, they’ll be disciplined.”

Although cops are permitted by state law to drive at excessive speeds in the event of an emergency (and if conditions permit them to do so in a safe manner), some police agencies set limits on the use of excessive speed in emergency situations. Officers with the Miami-Dade Police Department, for instance, are only permitted to drive 20 miles over the posted speed limit. Given that over 270 Miami-Dade officers were found to have traveled at speeds ranging from 91 to 115 mph, it seems clear the problem cannot be solved with the mere setting of a cap.

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