

Did You Know . . .

By Chief Matt Workman
Vernonia Police Department

Oregon Senate Bill 179, which affects school zone speed limits, went into effect July 1, 2004. There is a lot of confusion surrounding this law, even though the legislative intent was to clarify the definition regarding school zone speed limits and when the speed is in effect.

As of July 1, in any area that

has a designated school zone with a normal speed limit of 30 mph or less, the school zone speed limitations will now be in effect all the time. In other words, twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year. In any area where the normal speed limit is 35 mph or higher, the school zone speed limitations will be in effect only when designated. This designation includes, but is not limited to flashing lights, "when children

are present" signage, and signs with specific hours.

What does this mean for Vernonia? The designated school zone in Vernonia is on Bridge St., running from Grant Ave. by the Mini-Mart to California Ave. at the bottom of O-A Hill. Since the normal speed limit through this area is 25 mph, the school zone speed regulation of 20 mph is now in effect all day, everyday. This is regardless of the signs designating "when children are present."

It might be easier to consider the entire designated school zone as having a 20 mph speed limit, all the time.

As with any change in the law, we, as police officers, realize it will be difficult for the public to ingrain the new speed expectations into their minds. It can be very easy to assume that, since it is summer, the school zones are not valid. School zones were intended to

be observed year around, given the propensity for children to use the facilities in the area of schools. With Senate Bill 179, the legislature was attempting to minimize confusion and increase safety around schools.

The Vernonia Police Department will be enforcing the school zone speed designations as required by law. Until the new law is fully established, we anticipate much of the en-

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