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## Police to target loud car stereos

**St. Petersburg police will stop motorists whose music can be heard 100 feet away.**

By LE'VADA GRAY

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ST. PETERSBURG -- If your car stereo is blasting Livin' La Vida Loca a little too loudly, it soon could be a costly tune.

Friday, St. Petersburg police officers plan to put Operation Tone Down into effect to decrease the number of noise violations in neighborhoods. Officers will stop motorists playing music loud enough to be heard at least 100 feet away from their vehicles.

For a first-time violation, drivers will be given a verbal warning and the officer will notify a dispatcher of the stop. If the same driver is stopped a second time, then the driver will be fined \$43 with no points on the driver's license.

"The whole idea is to get them to turn down the volume," said Lt. Tom Carey of District 3.

A 1997 state law declares it illegal for a driver to play music that can be heard 100 feet away or disturbs people inside homes, churches, schools or hospitals.

"The multitude of calls throughout the city is what sparked the investigation," said police spokeswoman Lilla Davis-Mays.

The campaign is headed by Carey, who submitted a study of the problem in June with the help of Officer Mike Preshur.

There were 2,213 noise violations reported from Jan. 1 to June 25 this year and of those, 39 citations were given to drivers playing their stereo systems too loudly.

The violations were reported in an area from 114th Avenue N to 54th Avenue S and Snell Isle to 49th Street.

Police officers offered a demonstration Monday in Lot 51 of the Bayfront Center Arena to show the type of car noise violations they will investigate.

Sgt. Gary Robbins said 60 to 65 decibels is a comfortable level for residential areas.

"When people start feeling vibrations, you may get a larger number of complaints," Robbins said.

Robbins said many of the complaints from neighborhood associations and community organizations stem from high decibel levels produced by some car stereo systems.

In their study, Carey and Preshur explained that amplifiers and speakers affect the volume of the system. Depending on the system, the bass level can be heard up to 300 yards away.

As a part of the campaign, officers will be educated on how to stop cars for a non-moving traffic violation.

"We want (drivers) to simply respect the comfort level of everyone else," said police spokesman Bill Doniel.

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