

Canadian authorities to try 3D image of child to slow drivers

7 September 2010, by Lin Edwards



(PhysOrg.com) -- An optical illusion is about to be trialed in West Vancouver, Canada, starting September 7, to try to jolt reckless drivers into slowing down.

The illusion of a young girl chasing a ball will be on 22nd Street in a school zone by the British Columbia Automobile Association (BCAA) Traffic Safety Foundation, the District of West Vancouver, and safety advocacy group Preventable.

David Dunne, of BCAA, said the idea of the experiment is to remind motorists to expect the unexpected while on the road. The image is painted on the road and elongated to make it appear three-dimensional when viewed from an approaching car.

From the far distance the image will look like just a mark on the road, but the image of the girl and ball will appear to rise up from the road when the car is 30 meters away. At shorter distances, the image recedes again. If drivers are traveling at the posted speed of 30 km/h, they will be able to stop in time when they realize they are seeing an image of a child on the road.

The optical illusion campaign will cost \$15,000 and will be installed close to École Pauline Johnson Elementary School, and will remain in place for a week. There will also be a sign alerting drivers to a [traffic safety](#) program in place ahead, saying "You're probably not expecting kids to run into the road." Police will also be patrolling the area.

Mr Dunne said September and October see the most child fatalities on the roads, and parents are often the most reckless and inattentive of drivers. Traditional safety methods have failed to get the message across, and it is hoped the [3D image](#) experiment will surprise drivers and remind them they need to slow down and drive with caution, especially near schools. He also said pedestrians need to be alert and not assume they are safe just because they are on a marked crossing. "Everyone has to expect the unexpected," he said.

Manager of roads and transportation, Mr Brent Dozzi, said it has always been a challenge to try to get drivers to slow down, and static signs do not work because they become part of the landscape. He said drivers should always be driving defensively, as though a child could run out onto the road at any moment.

Concerns have been raised that the image could surprise inattentive drivers too much, causing them to slam on the brakes and perhaps be rear-ended or even swerve into real children walking nearby, not realizing the girl on the road is an illusion, but Mark Jan Vrem of the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) said the ICBC supports anything that slows [drivers](#) and encourages them to stay alert, and believes the project is a great idea.

David Dunne said the design is a static image, and added that "if a driver can't respond to this appropriately, that person shouldn't be driving." Principal of the École Pauline Johnson school, David Langmuir, also backs the plan, although he was initially skeptical, saying the image becomes

clear only gradually and is most realistic at 30 meters, “but then the realism of that image declines rapidly” as the driver approaches it.

The image will be removed after a week, and feedback from police, parents and traffic engineers will be studied to determine if the experiment made any improvement to driver behavior.

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APA citation: Canadian authorities to try 3D image of child to slow drivers (2010, September 7) retrieved 8 December 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-09-canadian-authorities-3d-image-child.html>

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