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The Burleson Police Department is adding another safety program to its arsenal of services starting next month.

Burleson will launch the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement program on Oct. 3 with one traffic officer. This is a safety initiative designed to reduce serious crashes involving commercial motor vehicles through enforcement of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations as well as state laws and City ordinances. The officer is authorized to stop a commercial vehicle for random roadside inspections, place dangerous commercial vehicles or drivers out of service, and issue citations for violations of regulations.

Burleson has five federally-funded roads running through the city limits. Those include I-35W, Hwy. 174 (Wilshire Boulevard), FM 731 (John Jones Drive), FM 3391 (East Renfro Street) and FM 1902.

“A high volume of commercial motor vehicles, without the ability to regulate them, is a disaster waiting to happen,” Burleson Police Chief Tom Cowan said.

According to the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, commercial motor vehicles account for approximately 15 percent of all fatal crashes nationwide. More than 60 percent of all fatal crashes involving commercial motor vehicles occur on rural roads, and of all fatal crashes occurring in work zones, more than 10 percent involve a commercial motor vehicle.

Since January 2009 there have been approximately 64 crashes involving commercial motor vehicles in Burleson. Of that, 31 crashes were on I-35W, 25 were on Hwy. 174/Wilshire Boulevard and the rest of the crashes were on FM 3391/East Renfro Street, FM 731/John Jones Drive, FM 1902, and FM 917.

The 2007 state traffic counts for all vehicles in a 24-hour period include a high of 119,000 vehicles on I-35W between Alsbury Boulevard and the north city limits; 39,000 vehicles on Hwy. 174, between Renfro Street and Summercrest Boulevard; 25,000 on Alsbury Boulevard between I-35W and Renfro Street 18,800 on FM 3391 between I-35W and Loy Street; and 13,000 on FM 731 at Summercrest Boulevard. State traffic counts from 2008 for commercial vehicles

in one 24-hour period show 14,463 commercial vehicles on I-35W (north of Hwy. 174) and 4,350 on Hwy. 174 between I-35W and Hwy. 67.

The traffic officer's training includes basic license and weight school, United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) schools (federal paperwork and federal equipment), and a state school on Intrastate rules. Officers may boost their knowledge with training in hazardous materials, cargo tankers, and passenger vehicle inspections. The certification includes field training with each USDOT school. Training is usually covered by federal funds while the City has to fund the officer's salary/benefits, vehicles and equipment.

In Texas, a city must have a population of 25,000-plus and be located in a county of 500,000-plus to be eligible to start an enforcement program. Burleson has more than 36,690 residents and part of Burleson is in Tarrant County, which boasts more than 500,000 residents. Other Metroplex cities that have commercial vehicle enforcement programs include Carrollton, Dallas, Dallas County, Denton, Euless, Fort Worth, Grapevine, Grand Prairie, Garland, Lancaster, Lewisville, Mansfield and North Richland Hills.