

F1 patrol car to boost road safety

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The F999 is part of a new campaign designed to raise awareness of road safety issues and of the role of the police in Abu Dhabi. Courtesy of Inside The National

ABU DHABI // As Grand Prix fever takes a hold in the capital, the police have got into the spirit of the November 1 race by building their own 400kph Formula One machine.

Billed as the fastest police car in the world, the F999 is part of a new campaign designed to raise awareness of road safety issues and of the role of the police in Abu Dhabi.

It will be introduced to the public on October 28 at a special festival hosted by officers on the Corniche.

But you will not find the F999 chasing speeding drivers along Airport Road, despite it being fitted with a siren, flashing lights and a radio connection to the police operations room.

However, there are serious messages behind the custom-made supercar. One is that real speed belongs on the racetrack, not on the streets.

The police also want to associate the F999 with the pledge: “We ensure your safety in the fastest way.”

“Even if we are not going to use the car, the public will still make the connection between the police and their speed in responding to people’s needs,” said Lt Majed al Marzouqi, the chief of media studies and security co-ordination at the Ministry of Interior.

Lt al Marzouqi said the F1 initiative was the latest example of how the police could use major public occasions creatively to help convey their message to the widest audience possible.

“We want to show people that any event that takes place in Abu Dhabi, we will be part of it, that we are living the atmosphere with them,” he said.

“Now we are dealing with people who have passion for cars, [and] every time we see what people’s passion is we get involved,” Lt al Marzouqi said.

“We are making it easier for the public to feel what Formula One is all about. Many people want to feel the F1 experience. They are seeing the display of cars in Marina Mall, but they don’t get a chance to ride one and feel the experience.

“So whoever wants to be close to one of the fastest F1 cars, he will get a chance [with the F999]. We won’t tell people ‘don’t touch it’, because we are doing it for the people and the community,” he said.

The F999 has been built using parts brought in from around the world. The engine is from Ireland, the bodywork from Germany and the chassis from Hungary.

While the chassis of the F1 cars used by today’s racing drivers can be raised to give up to two centimetres extra ground clearance, the F999 can be raised up to 10cm. “We can drive it on all roads,” Lt al Marzouqi said.

The unveiling of the F999 takes place at the Corniche festival, which will run from the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce all the way to Marina Mall.

“The festival will also include draws without a competition, it’s all for free. The prizes will be revealed next week,” Lt al Marzouqi said.

In addition to the F999, the police launched a media campaign this week that will continue until the race itself.

The website www.f999.ae is due to go live today to display information about the F1 police campaign, the F999 and news feeds about F1.

Two TV commercials are also being broadcast on www.youtube.com/theabudhabipolice, on Abu Dhabi TV, the Abu Dhabi al Emarat channel and on Abu Dhabi Sports.

The commercials will also be shown in cinemas in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain from tomorrow until the end of the campaign.

One of the adverts promotes the use of seatbelts and carries the slogan “Formula thrills, speeding kills”. It shows an F1 car driving on the Corniche surrounded by police cars and motorbikes with helicopters flying above.

The voice-over says: “Abu Dhabi police, with you for the journey ahead.” It was intended to convey the message that the police were involved in all public events, Lt al Marzouqi said.

“We are not encouraging people to speed, we are just showing them that on the roads they should drive safely and commit to the rules, and that speeding should only happen on the circuit,” he said.

The second commercial shows well-known sports cars driving through Abu Dhabi. The voice-over says: “Hailing from all corners of the world, living in perfect harmony, the nations of the world unite safely in Abu Dhabi.”

Another part of the campaign utilises the social networking website Facebook with a page titled “Abu Dhabi police GHQ”.

Adverts are also being aired on Radio 1, Radio 2, Star FM and Emirates FM.

Lt al Marzouqi said the main thrust of the campaign was to promote the use of seatbelts and to cut speeding.

“Worldwide, most accidents are due to speeding and not wearing seatbelts. However, over the past four years, figures have been decreasing every six months here in Abu Dhabi,” he added.

The police are confident the F999 will repeat the success the force enjoyed when they launched their custom police motorcycle earlier this year.

“We achieved much more than we expected. We developed a better communication with bikers’ clubs around the UAE,” Lt al Marzouqi said.

“We’ve been having constant communication with bikers’ groups, even about the problems they encounter during their rides from Abu Dhabi to Dubai.”