

Pennsylvania State Police

Year 2004 Press Releases

Colonel Miller Responds to Story on Radar Units

Commissioner Says All State Police Radar Units Are Accurate and Reliable

(March 9, 2004) -- State Police Commissioner Jeffrey B. Miller today issued the following statement regarding an article about State Police use of radar that appeared in today's edition of the Philadelphia Daily News:

"The article on radar in today's edition of the Philadelphia Daily News is inaccurate and misleading. The article inaccurately implies that State Police have used faulty radar equipment in conducting speed enforcement operations over a period of years. I want to make it perfectly clear to the public that State Police has never used faulty radar equipment. Under state law, all radar equipment must be tested at least every 60 days by an independent testing facility. In addition, State Police goes beyond the requirements of state law and requires troopers to run an internal accuracy test on every radar unit at the start of every enforcement detail and an external test of each device using a tuning fork at both the beginning and end of every detail.

The details of State Police testing were provided to the Daily News both in writing and through phone interviews with Lt. Col. Ralph Periandi, Deputy Commissioner of Operations, and Lt. Col. Henry Oleyniczak, Deputy Commissioner of Staff. However, today's Daily News article did not include any information regarding the legally mandated testing or the additional steps taken by the Department. This omission resulted in Daily News readers being presented with a one-sided story that, regrettably, is inaccurate and incomplete.

The Daily News article is based primarily on testimony offered by a State Police employee at a criminal trial in Cumberland County in September 2003. The testimony concerned frequency noise or interference from the alternators of some State Police vehicles that can cause ancillary readings on certain radar units when the unit is not being used to measure speed.

The Department fully investigated this issue and determined that the radar units have an internal override that suppresses the interference when the radar is aimed at a moving vehicle. The fact that the frequency noise does not interfere with a trained trooper's ability to use the radar unit to measure speed was confirmed by the Department, by the manufacturer and by Guth Laboratories of Harrisburg, an independent testing facility.

It is absurd to suggest that State Police would knowingly use faulty radar equipment. If the 572 Decatur Genesis handheld radar units identified in the Daily News article did not work properly, the Department simply would have used the 400 other radar units it owns while resolving any problem. The fact of the matter is that the Genesis handheld units are accurate, reliable devices.

Information on this issue has been posted on the State Police web site since Dec. 15, 2003 (<http://www.psp.state.pa.us/psp/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=170565>). The Daily News was directed to that web site before publishing its article, but did not see fit to share any of the information contained therein with its readers."

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Pennsylvania State Police
Public Information Office
1800 Elmerton Avenue
Harrisburg, PA 17110
717-783-5556
