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Top state cop: Radar's accurate

Despite experts' finding malfunctions

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Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner Jeffrey Miller yesterday insisted his department has not issued speeding tickets using faulty radar equipment.

"It is absurd to suggest that state police would knowingly use faulty radar equipment," Miller said in a statement responding to an article in yesterday's Daily News.

"The fact of the matter is that the Genesis hand-held units are accurate, reliable devices."

Kate Philips, Gov. Rendell's spokeswoman, would say only that "State Police has assured the governor that all radar units are tested on a regular basis and are functioning accurately."

She referred further radar questions to the state police.

The Daily News reported yesterday that state troopers have written thousands of speeding tickets using a radar gun that is so defective it would read a rock as going 70 mph.

State cops have ticketed more than 200,000 motorists, costing them more than \$26 million in fines, since troopers began complaining about the gun in late 2002, records show.

The problem occurs when the Genesis hand-held radar gun is plugged into the cigarette lighter of the state police's 2003 or 2004 Ford Crown Victoria Interceptor when the car is running, according to court testimony from the state police's own radar expert, Timothy Shingara.

The car is loaded with so much police equipment - computers, lights, etc. - the alternator runs constantly, producing an electrical whine.

The gun then sometimes reads the alternator whine, not the radar, Shingara testified.

"The Genesis radar interprets that [alternator whine] as speed readings in the 70-mile-an-hour range," Shingara testified at a Cumberland County trial last September.

He said Decatur Electronics, which makes the gun, has acknowledged the problem and recommended a fix.

Other sources said the state police rejected those fixes - which included a free battery pack.

The problem and its possible solutions are well-documented, sources said.

J. Michael Sheldon, the attorney whose client beat the speeding ticket after Shingara's testimony, said he's not surprised that Miller is defending the guns.

"The Daily News caught them with their pants down and they're embarrassed," Sheldon said.

"It's an expected position. If they admit to this, can you imagine how many people would challenge their tickets?"

"I'm sure people are going to be challenging their tickets just based on the information in the article."

Miller's statement claims that the department issued a moratorium on the guns for three months last fall, tested them in independent labs and determined that an internal override suppresses the interference when the radar is aimed at a moving vehicle.

However, sources told the Daily News the tests the labs did would not detect the problem and the internal override Miller was referring to does not correct it.

In addition, several sources said troopers across the state, and particularly in the Reading barracks, have complained about phantom speed readings on the gun since the moratorium was lifted on Dec. 12.