

Halton Police demonstrate new automated tech capable of monitoring hundreds of licence plates per hour

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looking for other offences and what not instead of having to type plates in and run plates," said Const. David Allen, who accompanied The IFP on a ride-along to demonstrate the tech in action.

"Looking for suspended drivers and stolen vehicles is one of the functions of a police officer, so just the fact it can operate in the background and I can go about my day doing my patrols, it's great. It's a huge boost in safety."

"It's a force multiplier, too. Because if a typical officer can run 50 plates in a shift, this thing can do hundreds per hour," added Allen, who headed up the pilot project and rollout.

According to Allen, the technology has been evolving for decades, but the HRPS is among the first handful of forces in

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the province to utilize the technology.

The technology was tested last year in Burlington in one vehicle. The results were so positive, the Halton police services board approved the installation of 10 more units, which will ensure each of the region's three policing districts will be supported by at least three cruisers equipped with the technology.

The unit, which is monitored through a special screen, is connected to three cameras in the cruiser, one on each side and one in the rear. The dual colour/infrared cameras monitor plates as they pass while the cruiser is either moving or parked on the side of the road.

"Once the system is turned on, the infrared LEDs blast out infrared

light, which when it hits a reflective licence plate, bounce back and the system makes a determination that it is a licence plate, takes a snapshot of that licence plate and then tries to decipher what the plate characters are," said Allen.

"It then uses optical character recognition (to read the plate), then it checks those characters against a list of known bad plates, whether on the suspended driver list, stolen vehicle list - it does it in under a second," he added.

Plates with no violations or warrants attached to them cycle through until the system gets a hit. The system breaks down offences into two categories; low priority and high priority. When a minor offence, such as an expired plate sticker, is identified,

the system alerts the officer with a yellow flashing screen. A high-priority offence, such as a stolen car, fake plates or criminal warrant, appears as a red alert on the screen accompanied by a voice recording identifying it as a high-priority hit.

The officer is provided with all necessary details on the screen instantaneously, and based on their discretion can then pull the driver of the marked vehicle over and investigate further.

"All the officers learn during their training that a hit is only a suspicion that something might be wrong with that plate, and that they still have to formulate their own grounds to lay a charge," said Allen. "All it does is (serve

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Music: Yes _____ No _____ Number of Marchers/Walkers: _____ Overall Length: _____

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