Pacific County Task Force Deploys License Plate Cameras

Local News

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RAYMOND, Wash. - A newly formed task force in Pacific County recently installed some high tech equipment to find stolen vehicles on Washington's backroads.
County Sheriff's Chief Criminal Deputy Pat Matlock tells us the Automated License Plate Recognition device scans for license plates and runs them against a state and national database to find vehicles reported stolen or relating to a crime, and alerts the officer.
Last year Sheriff Scott Johnson explained to the Washington State Auto Theft Prevention Authority that highway 101 might be a more descrete route for criminals to attempt escape into Oregon with a stolen vehicle. The authority awarded enough grant money to fully fund two (ALRP) devices for the Pacific County Regional Auto Theft Task Force.

During the early portion of 2011, law enforcement agency administrators in Pacific County met with each other and shared ideas regarding technology that would assist officers and deputies with locating stolen vehicles, vehicles used during the commission of a crime or vehicles associated with serious crimes such as violent assaults, homicides or kidnapping Amber Alert issues. After discussing ideas and logistics, they decided to implement a new and localized task force focusing on auto theft and crimes associated with automobiles. The name of the group was decided as the Pacific County Regional Auto Theft task force. The group includes the Pacific County Sheriff’s Office, the Long Beach Police Department, the South Bend Police Department, the Raymond Police Department and the Shoalwater Bay Tribal Police Department.

A key component needed to help aid with the enforcement efforts was a piece of equipment called the Automated License Plate Recognition device. This device includes a “plate finder” which is a sophisticated firmware that continuously searches the “dual lens” camera for the presence of the license plate. As the plate is detected by the camera, the dual lens is triggered to capture both color and infrared images of the vehicle and plate. The camera is able to see license plates regardless of sun glare, darkness or other adverse conditions. It uses a “Triple Flash Technology” which varies the flash, shutter and gain settings to capture multiple plate images thus ensuring the highest quality photo which is sent to the processer within the police vehicle. If the license plate has been entered with the state or national database as a stolen vehicle or as a vehicle associated with a crime, the device will alert the officer of the issue.

During the late portion of 2011, Pacific County Sheriff Scott Johnson, approached board members of the Washington State Auto Theft Prevention Authority regarding possible grant money or additional funding to aid in the purchase of one or more of these devices. Sheriff Johnson advised the board that the only other major route of travel from Interstate 5 was via State Route 101 south through Pacific County towards the Oregon and California coast. Sheriff Johnson stated that with less law enforcement coverage within rural areas such as Pacific County, criminals would possibly think they had a better chance to go undetected if they chose State Route 101 as their travel destination. The authority awarded enough grant money to the Pacific County Regional Auto Theft Task Force to purchase two (ALRP) devices. No local funds were used to purchase these devices. The devices

have recently been installed and deployed on two police vehicles within the county. One device has been installed on a South Bend Police vehicle and the other has been installed on a Raymond Police vehicle. The task force felt that the two police that State Route 101 ran directly through would be the best location to deploy the new devices. The task force hopes to request additional funding for more devices at a later date. For more information and success stories and testimonials, the device manufacturer website is www.pipstechnology.com.