

Electronic Citations Speed Up Ticketing Process for Police

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Maryland State Police Cpl. Christopher Corea pulls an e-citation for speeding out of a printer in his patrol car.

Police agencies and troopers in several states are tossing out handwritten tickets in favor of electronic citations as a way to improve accuracy and save time.

With the quick swipe or scan of a driver's license, officers are able to enter the location, type of violation and print the ticket all from a handheld device, said Chief Deputy Derrick Cunningham of the Montgomery County (Ala.) Sheriff's Office.

The sheriff's office has ordered 25 of the e-citation systems to be in place by mid-July, and is already looking at expanding the system to all 40 of its cruisers, Cunningham said.

"What we're trying to do is go paperless as much as possible," he said.

To cover the cost of the e-citation devices, the sheriff's office received a \$27,000 state grant for the first 25 machines and another grant for an additional 15, Cunningham said.

All of Alabama's 350 state troopers are equipped with the e-citation machines, which save time for the officers, Sgt. Tracy Nelson said.

In addition to saving time, Cunningham suspects the e-citations will cut down on two complaints his office often receives: poor handwriting and ticket fixing.

"No more can people call and say, 'I just got a speeding ticket, can you do something about it?'" he said, because the ticket is electronically transferred directly to court. Elsewhere:

- In California, the San Jose Police Department has 222 e-citation devices. The program began in 2007 and the department wants to add 500 to 600 more units to equip its entire fleet, Lt. Ruben Chavez said.

Chavez said the system improves the efficiency of the ticketing process by reducing officer errors.

"Some of the officers write like they should have gone to medical school and they'll leave boxes empty," he said. "Typed in — it's a lot easier to read."

- In Maryland, 75 state police cruisers are using e-citation software, called e-tix, that the agency created from scratch, said Sgt. Doug Baralo. The state police are partnering with local agencies to provide the software free-of-charge, he said.

By next year, 1,500 officers throughout Maryland, including state and local police, could have the software installed. The cost for hardware runs about \$1,000 per cruiser, all of which is covered through grants from numerous agencies, Baralo said.

Time spent on a routine traffic stop goes from eight to three minutes using e-citations and allows officers to quickly identify stolen vehicles or wanted persons by scanning driver's licenses to match up information in the database, Baralo said.

- In Florida, the Miami-Dade County Police have 35 of the devices and hope to eventually install 3,500 in all of their police cruisers, Lt. Tony Perez said.

The equipment, which includes a handheld unit, printer and software, costs about \$4,500 per officer, but the department hasn't secured grants for the devices, Perez said.

The machines reduce normal ticket writing time from 10 minutes to just two, Perez said.

- In Oklahoma City, 750 police vehicles will have electronic ticketing capabilities in the next year, said Kerry Wagnon, public safety program manager.

The e-citation function is part of a larger project aimed at putting more tools in the hands of the officers, Wagnon said.

"You're able to speed up the process of getting information both from the field and to the field," he said. "For the police officers, information is critical."