

DCJS COMMISSIONER'S TALKING POINTS NOT FOR COMMISSIONER SWARTS

Traffic Safety Initiatives and License Plate Reader Technology Conference 1 p.m. Thursday, June 19, 2008 – Welcome

Background

The conference begins at 1 p.m. (immediately following the Media Availability at 12:30 p.m. with Commissioner O'Donnell, DMV Commissioner David J. Swarts, Warren County DA Kate Hogan, Glens Falls Police Chief Joseph Bethel, a representative from the Warren County Sheriff's Office, and two presenters from the "LPR Success Stories" workshop that immediately follows the welcome).

At 1 p.m., Eileen Langer will get people's attention/call the conference to order and then introduce Warren County District Attorney Kate Hogan, who will briefly (two – three minutes) welcome everyone to Warren County and then hand the podium off to Commissioner O'Donnell.

After Commissioner O'Donnell gives her welcome remarks, she will introduce and hand the program over to DMV Commissioner David Swarts.

After Swarts speaks, Eileen Langer turns it over to the first presenter for the first workshop of the day, "LPR Success Stories," at which representatives from the Long Beach (Nassau County) Police Department; New York Association for Pupil Transportation, New York State Police and Bronx District Attorney's Office will present ways in which they have successfully used the technology.

Nearly 300 people from police departments, sheriff's offices and district attorney's offices across New York State have registered for the conference.

LPR Statistics

- There are approximately 450 license plate readers being utilized in New York State by 240 law enforcement agencies, including the 74 agencies that recently obtained them through a grant that DCJS received from the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee. That grant also is funding this conference.
- DCJS funded its first LPR in 2006, and the technology also has been funded through DMV, New York State Police, Office of Homeland Security, federal Byrne/JAG money and legislative member items. In addition, some departments have purchased LPRs on their own.

- In addition to more traditional LPR stats – 272 stolen vehicles recovered, 504 stolen plates identified, 409 wanted individuals – law enforcement agencies also have reported recovering 66 guns, nearly \$180,000 in cash, and drugs (including marijuana, cocaine and heroin) valued at nearly \$10,000 in 2007.

Key points:

- DCJS is committed to its mission – to Enhance Public Safety and Improve Criminal Justice – and our goal is to make New York the safest state in the nation (right now, we’re the safest large state in the nation, fifth overall, but we strive to be first, overall).
- While we as an agency rightly focus on reducing the incidents of violent and gun crime across the state – those efforts have paid off, with violent crime down 35 percent during the past 10 years – we can’t ignore the fact that more New Yorkers are at greater risk of harm when they get in their cars to drive.
 - In 2006 in New York State, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 1,433 people were killed in motor vehicle accidents. The number of drivers killed that year – 801 – is equivalent to the number of murders reported across the state in 2007.
- We can’t be the safest state in the nation if our roadways aren’t safe. And our roadways are more dangerous if suspended and revoked drivers get behind the wheel. A study by the American Automobile Association Foundation for Traffic Safety shows that nationally:
 - One in every five fatal crashes involves a driver who is definitely or possibly driving with an invalid license or no license.
 - Nearly 12 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes (nearly 7,700 drivers) have had their license suspended or revoked at least once in the preceding three years. And of those 7,700 drivers, more than 1,700 have had their licenses suspended or revoked three or more times, and about 100 have had their licenses suspended or revoked 10 or more times.
- By using LPRs, law enforcement agencies can target repeat offenders who endanger law-abiding drivers.
 - In just the past two years (2005 vs. 2007), the use of LPRs has resulted in a 12 percent increase in the number of tickets issued annually for uninsured operation, revoked registration and unlicensed operation. And tickets for the most serious of those violations – including second and third-degree aggravated unlicensed operation – have increased 20 percent from 2005 through 2007.

- Today, you will hear from peers across the state, country and even across the pond in England, who will share with you the innovative ways in which LPRs have enhanced the safety of their community's roads – and their communities as a whole.
 - For example, whenever an AMBER alert is issued, LPRs are activated immediately, providing electronic “eyes” that can read thousands of license plates.
 - Agencies with LPRs manually enter AMBER alert vehicle information into the LPR database, and they also search their LPR databases to determine if a record of past encounters with the vehicle exists.
 - As you know, time is of the essence when a child goes missing; this technology increases our odds of finding that child, and bringing him or her home safely.
 - You also will hear how this technology has allowed police to recover stolen cars, ensure safer bus rides for school children and even help solve a homicide.
- It's important to remember that there's so much more to this technology than the perception that local law enforcement is simply playing “gotcha” with those individuals who are late on their vehicle registrations.
- That's just the tip of the iceberg, of course, and it is my hope that this conference will allow you to:
 - Build upon partnerships among local, county, state and federal law enforcement. If New York is to be the safest state, no one agency can make that happen on its own.
 - Embrace innovative and unique ideas. We hope that you will learn from each other so that you can develop effective, traffic safety and crime-fighting strategies for your own communities.
 - Leave with good information to develop strong policies and procedures for using this technology to the fullest. The smart, strategic use of technology, in tandem with good, old-fashioned, shoe-leather police work, will allow us to stay one step ahead of those individuals who break the law.

Bio of David J. Swarts for introduction (to come on Wednesday)