

eCitations: From Technology Aversion to Full Implementation

Technology in law enforcement exists to simplify and improve the daily responsibilities of Officers. However, to be truly successful, technology must be utilized by every member of a department.

In The Police Chief Magazine article *The Future is Here: Technology in Police Departments*, Paul D. Schultz, Chief of Police, Lafayette, CO, explains that “It is essential for law enforcement executives to stay current with ongoing technological developments. Today’s executives need not only to be cognizant of developing technology but also to have a working knowledge of what this technology can do for their agencies.”

While this article makes a good point regarding being knowledgeable on new technology, it does overlook the most important aspect of implementation: total Officer engagement. Yet, the main impediment to this goal exists within the technological reluctance of some staff members themselves.

Why is there reluctance?

Technology aversion cannot be easily dismissed by education level or age. Being adverse to change is human nature. Once a process or procedure becomes routine, it can be hard for anyone to break out of his or her comfort zone.

In the case of eCitations, departments have already undertaken the time and expense of upgrading their cars and training their personnel on the electronic mobile ticketing system. Yet, many departments will admit that not every officer uses the system. This is an odd occurrence considering the obvious time and safety benefits new technology will deliver.

Consider how long it took for officers to wear bulletproof vests despite the enormous safety benefits. It is this type of reluctance that causes many police departments to fall short of their department-wide implementation goals.

For instance, when it comes to issuing traffic tickets, the excuse is always the same: “I can write a ticket faster by hand than on an electronic device.” This belief is simply incorrect. With even minimal training, using intuitive data entry software to enter data will reduce data input time and eliminate transcription errors. It’s easy to overlook the time it takes for office administrators to transcribe paper tickets into a usable digital format.

Traffic Officer Erin Grandizio of Easttown Township, PA Police Department explained that “We handwrote all of our tickets previously. The benefits of the new system are that when you are on the street, you can issue multiple citations to one driver in a much shorter amount of time than it takes to handwrite one single citation. Every citation goes directly to court, so we’re not running into the issues of the officer coming back and putting the citation in the court bin, then another officer delivering it to the court. We’re not running into the problems of it getting there late or it not getting there at all because it goes directly to the court which saves everyone time.”

419 Sargon Way, Module J
Horsham, PA 19044
☎ 215.394.1906
📠 215.394.1908
sales@upsafety.net
support@upsafety.net



www.upsafety.net

Officer Grandizio added “When we handwrote citations, our more common errors were that the police department address was missing or the direction of travel would be left blank. With the new solution, we no longer have any of those issues.”

How do you increase officer usage?

Building a comfort level with the new software is necessary for success. As with using a firearm, being comfortable new technology takes proper training and practice. Officers who embrace the electronic citation process will see the amount of time it takes to issue a roadside ticket cut in half. And any traffic Officer will tell you that reducing roadside stop times exponentially increases the safety of that same Officer.

In light of such clear benefits, department management should set a departmental policy backed by official order for every Officer to use the new electronic solution. Mandating the use of technology during implementation ensures that every Officer will be properly trained at the same time.

As with any mandate, there may be a few who are still reluctant. To further encourage usage compliance, require every Officer to file an additional report explaining why they submitted a handwritten ticket over the electronic version. With these recommendations in place, every Officer will soon be fully invested in the solution and your department will quickly realize the positive benefits that change can bring.

United Public Safety remains your dedicated partner through the eCitation process. If you have any questions or comments, please contact us. We are committed to improving safety and building efficiencies into the critical work accomplished by law enforcement professionals everywhere.

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