

Pennsylvania State Police Testimony
Senate Committees on Transportation
and Law and Justice
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Presented by:
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Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Senator Pippy, and members of the Committees on Transportation and Law and Justice. I am Colonel Frank E. Pawlowski, Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police. I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk about our Department's implementation of the Statewide Radio Network or "STARNET."

In early 2001, the Pennsylvania State Police began using the 800 MHz STARNET system to provide data connectivity for the State Police Mobile Office. By December 2002, the statewide rollout of the Mobile Office system was completed. Since then, STARNET has been a consistently reliable data transmission platform.

Mobile Office data transactions allow troopers to check the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network, commonly known as CLEAN, for wanted and missing persons, persons who are subject to Amber Alerts and Protection from Abuse Orders, stolen vehicles, and suspended drivers' licenses and registrations. All of these checks are made within seconds using STARNET as the data carrier. Our troopers are also able to obtain Penn DOT driver license photographs and transmit the photos into patrol vehicles where they can be used for identification purposes.

Troopers throughout the Commonwealth use STARNET data connectivity on a daily basis to make data transactions on 1,389 Mobile Office terminals in patrol cars. In 2008, State Police troopers performed 2,925,540 CLEAN and NCIC queries with Mobile Office. One year later, that amount rose to 3,389,630 CLEAN and NCIC queries via the State Police Mobile Office. This represents a 16 percent increase in the number of persons and vehicles checked by troopers on patrol everyday. Significantly, Mobile

Office transactions made through STARNET do not require any recurring charge from a data service provider.

In combination with Mobile Office, STARNET significantly enhances our effectiveness as well as officer safety. When an officer queries CLEAN and the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) about a potentially wanted person or stolen vehicle, for example, a positive response is called a "hit." We have continued to refine Mobile Office and its ability to check CLEAN/NCIC for wanted persons and stolen vehicles. Thanks to continued development, when a trooper enters a vehicle registration plate number, the Mobile Office computer automatically checks the registered owner of the vehicle. This insures troopers are armed with the best information possible to enhance their safety, as well as the public, at traffic stops and crime scenes.

Another great feature of the Mobile Office/STARNET partnership is its text-messaging capability. Mobile Office software is installed on desktop computers in the communications room of every station. This allows our troopers to communicate with dispatch and other troopers through text messages. Text messaging comes in handy when dispatchers and troopers need to communicate sensitive investigative information they do not want heard over the radio.

Text messaging also serves as a back-up means of communications should the VHF voice radio system fail for reasons beyond our control in areas not yet migrated to STARNET for voice. In November 2003, for example, the State Police VHF tower at North Mountain collapsed, leaving Chambersburg and Carlisle Stations without radio communications. Several hours later, temporary VHF communications were set up at the Chambersburg Station, but Carlisle still did not have any VHF capability.