



## Hooksett police going hands-free with technology

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**HOOKSETT** – Police officers responding to an emergency no longer need to take their eyes off the road to activate the cruiser's sirens and lights.

Instead, all 11 of Hooksett's marked cruisers are now equipped with the latest hands-free technology developed at the University of New Hampshire.

Armed with a \$55,000 grant, Hooksett spent most of 2006 installing the new equipment, which includes microphones, laptop computers and the latest software.

Officers now just have to press a "talk" button on the steering wheel and speak into a microphone located below the visor.

Say "siren on" and the siren begins to wail. Say "lights on" and the blue flashing lights turn on. A computerized voice even repeats each command back to the officer.

"Obviously a guy is responding with lights and sirens, having him take his eyes off the road for a split second could be a kid walking in front of him," said Lt. Les McDaniel. "The more he can keep his eyes on the road, the safer it is for everyone."

Hooksett, along with other police departments across the state, is following in the steps of the New Hampshire State Police, which became the first group to test the new product, called Project54 after the television show "Car 54, Where are You?"

It typically costs \$11,000 to equip each cruiser with the new equipment, but by using existing hardware that was compatible, Hooksett was able to outfit all of its cruisers.

It is up to each officer if he or she chooses to use the new technology.

McDaniel predicts that once the department upgrades to wireless capability, officers will begin to see the benefits of the software, especially when they are able to run their own motor vehicle checks via voice activation, instead of calling dispatch and waiting for a response.

Even now, officers using Project54 can verbally change to any police department's radio frequency across the state and communicate with that department directly.

Police Chief Stephen Agrafiotis said he tries to run a progressive police department.

"People think we buy the new stuff just because it's new and that's not the case," he said, adding that each purchase for the department is evaluated on whether or not it increases the department's effectiveness or efficiency.

"Our bottom line is to protect and serve all citizens," he said.

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