

Detecting the detectors

New technology makes radar devices difficult to hide from police

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NIAGARA FALLS – Licence, ownership, insurance and radar detector.

It's an unconventional refrain motorists in Niagara region are hearing more of since Niagara Regional Police bought three radar detector detectors from an Australian manufacturer 18 months ago.

Const. Mike Moore of the Niagara Regional Police's traffic unit said 725 radar detectors have been seized to date using the Spectre II detector. The set fine for drivers caught with radar detectors is \$170 dollars, but Moore said the penalty can go as high as \$1,000.

"The fines are not about cash recovery," said Moore in reference to the \$2,000 price tag for the NRP's radar detector detectors. "Preventing collisions and saving lives, that's what it's all about."

The OPP currently has more than 50 detectors deployed on the province's roads.

A study on the Canada Safety Council website attributed 30 per cent of fatal car crashes to excessive speed. In 2002 and 2003, 59 people died in car accidents in Niagara region.

While Moore spends a good deal of time training officers on how to use the new units, he laughs when recalling some of the excuses he has heard from drivers as to why they have radar detectors.

"I was only using it as a compass," is one of his favourites. "I've got a couple of speeding tickets and I can't afford anymore," is another. One that doesn't make a lot of sense Moore said when facing a \$170 fine and loss of the radar detector, which can retail for between \$50 and \$400 US, Moore said.

Moore said although there are large signs on all of the bridges entering Canada warning drivers the devices are illegal in Ontario, 75 per cent of drivers caught with radar detectors are from the U.S.

"The American drivers disregard the signs until they're being pulled over," he said. "Then they unplug the unit and hide it."



Harry Rosettani, Special to The Review

Const. Erin Madill of the casino patrol unit displays radar detectives seized from vehicles travelling the roads of Niagara region. Under the Highway Traffic Act, the fine for having a radar detector is \$170.

And Moore added people try hiding the devices in some unusual places. "They'll say check the car, you won't find a radar detector. That's because people will put them down their pants, in their purses or throw them out the window."

Moore recalled one driver who smashed his on the ground and said, "There, it's not a radar detector anymore."

Technological improvements to

the Spectre II have rendered even the most sensitive radar detector ineffective, as good as being smashed on a freshly paved highway Moore said.

"The technology was outdated and we were missing 80 per cent of RDs out there," Moore said. "Now, by the time the radar detector notifies you, it's too late and you are being stopped and receiving a ticket."