

GPS Systems Save Money for County



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(Monroe Co., N.Y.) - Rising gasoline costs are straining police department budgets, but the system that helps them track patrol cars is also helping conserve gasoline and save lives.

It's what's in the trunk that's helping the county save at the pump.

Monroe County vehicles fill up at designated pumps because they buy gasoline in bulk, but it's the GPS they carry in the trunk that helps save on gas.



All Monroe County Sheriff's cars have been equipped with GPS systems within the last two weeks.

Sheriff's Dept. Commander Sam Farina said, "One of the benefits you'll see...there are savings, it's a better use of our resources."

Farina showed us how the system allows 911 dispatchers to pinpoint the closest police car to respond to an emergency.

All police departments in Monroe County have one test car with GPS tracking as part of a county pilot program that will eventually add GPS systems to all squad cars in villages and towns.

Gates Police Chief David DiCaro says the systems can save lives by getting help to the scene more quickly. "We specifically see this as a valuable tool to help us," he said.

They also reduce travel which conserves gas. "Fuel is a concern for us. We monitor our budget closely...we try to keep track of cars not idling and that kind of thing," DiCaro said.

Gas costs are a concern. The county spent \$1.5 million on fuel for its vehicles this year. They'll spend \$800,000 on the GPS systems for 650 police cars, but say the benefits of these units are worth it.

Monroe County has GPS devices on 16 of its cars, and several more on order. These vehicles are used mainly for research (on fuel efficiency) and are tracked and monitored for accountability purposes.

The GPS units have already improved response times for sheriff's deputies.