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Police make quick use of park cameras

A few hours after five cameras were installed in Carlisle's Memorial Park, officers were able to watch them go to work. Without the cameras, a report of road rage between two men involved in a domestic dispute would have been much harder to prove.

Officer Chris Darhower and a dispatcher had just finished training on how to use the pan-and-zoom, 360-view cameras installed by a company called Iron Sky.

"So when the incident happened [Tuesday] evening, they were able to pull up the video with simply a few mouse clicks on the computer," Lt. Michael Dzezinski said.

The cameras in Memorial Park are soon to be joined by 10 downtown. Those are being installed.

Each one has the ability to be remotely adjusted by officers and dispatchers as needed. And each has a fixed position designed to capture suspicious activity – like the road rage that police said was captured on tape Tuesday night. Police said a car driven by Steve Mackie, 36, was seen "extremely close" to another vehicle on Pitt Street near the railroad tracks.

Officers went to the cameras after getting a call about the incident. Mackie and another man had been involved in a domestic dispute, and when the victim left the house, Mackie followed, police said.

The victim told police Mackie was passing illegally, tailgating and running stop signs, but police would have had to rely on his word had the cameras not been installed.

"Absent any witnesses, it would have been a matter of he-said versus he-said," Dzezinski said.

Scott Frigaard, vice president of sales for Iron Sky, has a ton of stories like that one.

"Typically, these systems are so effective because there is so much momentum built up before they go in," Frigaard said. "[Officers have] been trained, they understand how to use it and what it's there for." These aren't traffic cameras.

They are designed by Iron Sky to prevent and detect crime, and there are similar systems in other parts of the state.

In Carlisle, the cameras are placed near sidewalks, streets and parks, and the footage feeds into the Carlisle dispatch center. Soon, officers will be equipped to access the feed in their patrol cars.

A patrolman could potentially monitor a four-way stop intersection from a few blocks away, out of sight of drivers.

"The only reason they work is because of the diligence of the law enforcement officers," Frigaard said.

"They take pretty pictures, but without the efforts of law enforcement officers, they're just pretty pictures."

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