Ask the Chief…..

My friend works for a police department that doesn't have computers in their patrol cars and they do not wear body cameras. Shouldn't every department have these?

Unfortunately, acquiring such technology is not always as simple as it sounds. While all law enforcement officers would jump at the chance to acquire as much technology as possible to help insure safer communities and assist in criminal investigations, such technology and technological expertise comes at a very high cost that many agencies are unable to afford.

In the modern day "smart phone" world all of us have grown accustomed to technology at our fingertips. Instant contact and having the internet and GPS at our fingertips is common place. For many such technology is no longer a luxury, many see it as a necessity. What was once a free phone and $35 a month payment is now a 750 - $1,000 investment in a smartphone, and a $80-$100 a month (factoring in phone payment, insurance, fees and taxes) payment. That is $1,200 or more a year for one phone.

Such technology in policing is extremely costly. The initial purchase of the equipment itself is often the least cost in the overall process. Behind the laptop in a patrol car computer, as an example, is the software necessary to operate the system. Such operating software is extremely costly when you total the purchase of the product with continual costs for software upgrades. Now add the cost of the internet connection to link the traveling computer with the information needed located out there in the "cloud". Now multiply such costs by the number of cars you need to install such technology in that may be out on the road at one time. And don't forget the cost of the technology expert needed to maintain the system, and come to your aid when the technology crashes.

Now add in the costs for Records Management software in the department, Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software programs to take 9-1-1 calls and get you to incident in a timely fashion, mapping programs, hand-held radios (WT's), body cameras and software/hardware to store the information, and vehicle costs the annual payout for such technology by the department (depending on its size) can reach into the millions.

Let's put it in simple terms. For every $100,000 spent on technology that is 1-3 less officers on the street in your community when you include salary, insurance, workman's compensation, and health care to pay for the technology. And when was the

last time you saw a laptop chase a criminal down or handle a domestic violence incident?

While today's modern crime fighting shows highlight the technology available in the marketplace, and show technology solving crimes in the allotted one hour time slot of television, reality and Hollywood do not always exist in the same universe. People have come to expect that what they see on their television screens does exist in every police department. Yet often the cost greatly exceeds the financial resources of the community, and ultimately what tax payers can afford.