

FHP's new laser scanner cuts down time at crash scene



The RIEGL 3-D laser scanner spins 360 degrees and collects raw data up to 500,000 points per second, using laser and light. (Julie Gargotta, Staff)

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ORLANDO -- It's a device that's revolutionizing how local law enforcement investigate crash scenes, and Florida Highway Patrol is only the second state agency in the country to use it.

- **FHP using a new 3-D laser scanner to investigate crash scenes**
- **Device collects raw data using laser and light**
- **It allows FHP to cut down time investigating crash scenes**

"We are glad we've been given the opportunity to try this out," said Sgt. Kim Montes, with Florida Highway Patrol. "It's going to be a benefit to motorists here in Central Florida, as we don't have to keep the roads shutdown as long as we normally do."

[RIEGL's 3-D laser scanner](#), or LiDAR, spins 360 degrees; it collects raw data up to 500,000 points per second, using laser and light. Forty-five seconds later, it's done, ready to be moved to another spot within a crash scene.

Investigators can then move through the frozen scene with accuracy of three to five millimeters, picking up points the naked eye can't see — from where skid marks begin to blood.

In October, Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and MetroPlan Orlando decided to collaborate, purchasing the device for FHP to use as part of a pilot program. Since then, Sgt. Montes said her agency has used RIEGL 25-30 times on fatal crash scene investigations, slashing the time investigators need to spend collecting data nearly in half.

That equates to less time roadways are shutdown, causing backups and other potential crashes. It also means less toll revenue loss for CFX.

"It's helping us do our job. Our homicide investigators are thrilled to have this piece of equipment to use in their investigation," she said. "There is only one. It's a very expensive piece of equipment."

The scanner costs around \$100,000, the cost split in thirds by CFX, FDOT and MetroPlan. The lone scanner is stored at Troop D headquarters along Semoran Boulevard in Orlando, traveling all around Central Florida as it's needed for investigations.

"The data really provides so much more than they would traditionally be able to collect, because of time constraints on the scene," said Shannon Trammell, who does sales and operations for RIEGL.

In recent months, Trammell trained FHP troopers on how to use the scanner.

"They got outside with the equipment. We were like, 'Now it's your turn to do it, we're not helping,'" she said with a smile.

Made in Austria, and made popular by law enforcement in Europe, the scanner is mostly used for crash investigations. According to RIEGL, it's also frequently used for construction work, surveying and mapping everything from pipelines to powerlines.

"It makes me feel like we're contributing to something greater than just selling a product," said Trammell, who added she was excited the scanner would aid local law enforcement.

Sgt. Montes said it's a game changer for FHP, as it cuts a typical on-scene investigation taking 3-5 hours nearly in half.

"It's helping us do our job. Our homicide investigators are thrilled to have this piece of equipment to use in their investigation," Montes said.

Money has been approved to buy a second unit by a competing manufacturer, Leica, for Orlando Police Department, according to Keith DeLuca with HNTB, an engineering services provider agency for CFX. OPD will likely start using it in March.

DeLuca said that the pilot program will end in July and at that time, they'll make recommendations regarding which system works better, and if additional devices could be purchased.

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