

August 26, 2003

Dear Chief:

You recently asked a question about certification of radar operators. Specifically, you asked if there was any state law or regulation requiring police officers to be “certified” in radar operation. This question comes up periodically, and the answer is no.

Many departments have “certified” radar instructors on staff, and those instructors train other police officers to use the department’s radars. The methods for obtaining radar instructor status vary. Some radar vendors may offer an instructor course or a user “certification” course. As you described on the telephone, the Tennessee Highway Patrol offers a radar instructor certification course. The Northwestern University’s Traffic Institute also offers a radar instructor course.

The content and duration of radar users courses vary widely. Ultimately, the organization that “certified” the instructor will define a specific curriculum for instructors to certify users under the original organization’s auspices.

There is not state law or regulation mandating radar “certification,” and there are no laws or regulations defining a specific curriculum or duration of a radar certification school. In fact, many police departments do not “certify” their officers in radar operation. As a police management consultant, I recommend that police departments adequately train their officers in the use of radar, but, as I have mentioned, there are no standards that define what is the proper amount or content of the training. I am not sure that an officer would benefit more from a week long radar operator’s class than he/she would from some shorter class. The content and length of the class, if any, should be determined you, the chief of police.

If you have any further questions, or if I can ever be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Rex Barton
Police Management Consultant