

Can simulators prevent police car wrecks?

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Credit: University of Georgia

Police car wrecks are the biggest risk management expense related to law enforcement, causing local governments to lose money. New research from the University of Georgia shows that a driver training program can result in big savings.

Specifically, proper training with a [simulator](#) results in a 12:1 savings.

For a number of years, Local Government Risk Management Services (LGRMS), part of the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and the Georgia Municipal Association, has provided a driving simulator program for [law enforcement](#) officers. The associations knew the program was popular, but they didn't know if it was effective.

To find out if the program was worth its cost, the agency turned to Rob Hoyt, who holds the Dudley L. Moore Jr. Chair of Insurance at UGA's Terry College of Business.

"They wanted to know essentially two things: Does the simulator training reduce the frequency and severity of accidents, and is it cost-effective?" Hoyt said. "The board of the organization was wondering whether or not to expand the program, buy new equipment and keep investing in it. So they had to know if it was effective."

LGRMS handles risk management for [local governments](#) across Georgia, providing insurance for thousands of police and sheriff's deputies, as well as other [government](#) employees, across the state. While the agency provides driving simulator training at no cost to its members, it has an interest in reducing the insurance cost for local governments.

"From a research side, this was an interesting case because the same organization provided both the simulator training and the insurance pools the local governments participate in," Hoyt said. "They had access to all the information on both the automobile accidents and the simulator statistics."

Using data from the agency, Hoyt ran a statistical analysis on police car accidents before and after simulator training. He compared the results to similar precincts across the state.

"What we ultimately found was some evidence that simulator training reduced severity, but those results were mixed," he said. "What we did find was very compelling evidence around frequency. The training was highly correlated with reducing the number of accidents relative to size of the department."

With the simulator's effectiveness confirmed, the second step was to find out if those reductions were worth the cost of the training.

"We went back and got data on how much it cost to provide this training, and compared that to the savings through reduced accident [costs](#), and found that it was producing about a 12-to-1 return on investment," Hoyt said.

The research not only helped the LGRMS decide to continue and expand its simulator [training](#) program, it also was published in the Journal of Insurance Regulation.

The work has also caught the attention of law enforcement agencies elsewhere. This past spring Hoyt was invited to present his findings at a workshop hosted by the Center for Advanced Public Safety at the University of Alabama. Attendees included law enforcement officers from the Alabama State Patrol, University of Alabama Police Department, and cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport Police Departments.

Provided by University of Georgia

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