

Park City Police Consider New 3D Scanning Technology For Event Security

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HEXWAVE uses radar and AI to create 3D images of suspicious objects

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Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes announced a partnership with security manufacturer Liberty Defense to begin beta testing new imaging technology in Utah. The scanners could be used at sports stadiums, schools and large events, like the ones Park City hosts.

The product is called HEXWAVE, and it uses radar and artificial intelligence to identify suspicious objects. Individuals walk past HEXWAVE panels, which create a map of points on metallic and non-metallic objects. Then, in real time, the system develops a 3D image based on the points to determine what the object is. The panels could be placed anywhere—at a designated security checkpoint or in a more discreet location. Park City Police Chief Wade Carpenter says any object can be programmed into the system.

“If you say we want to look for suspicious items, such as pipe bombs, bomb vests, pressure cookers in a backpack—those types of things that might draw attention or concern, obviously, for a major event—that the thing is, you can create whatever parameters you want,” Carpenter said.

Carpenter says organizers for private events can set the parameters for their security and use this technology to reflect that. For example, if an organizer permits concealed carry at the event, firearms can be removed from HEXWAVE’s AI data library. The venue’s security would oversee the technology, though police could be contacted if a threat is perceived.

“If you go to Disneyland, you’re subject to search, obviously,” Carpenter said. “If you’re going through a bag check, and they’re looking, and for some reason they see something, then law enforcement is called and they deal with that, and that’s kind of how this would work.”

Carpenter says Park City Police hasn’t approached the Sundance Institute about using HEXWAVE at the festival, but the police department tries to stay on the cutting edge of security technology to enhance public safety at the hundreds of events Park City hosts.

“As the police chief, it’s my responsibility to continually evaluate what best practices are and make sure to balance that with the Fourth Amendment, and make sure people’s rights are being upheld,” Carpenter said.

As for an individual’s expectation to privacy, Carpenter doesn’t feel HEXWAVE crosses a line—he says it’s not as invasive as facial recognition or TSA airport security. But American Civil Liberties Union of Utah Legal Director John Mejia criticized Attorney General Sean Reyes for agreeing to use Utahns as “guinea pigs” for the tech. Carpenter says the police department is in the beginning stages of analyzing the technology, but if its implementation isn’t good for the community, they won’t use it.

“As we move forward with this, this will be something that is really a community decision,” Carpenter said. “We’ll run it through [City] Council to make sure that they are on board with it. I just think it’s one of those other, many, many tools that we can utilize, as long as we’re using it appropriately.”

A press release from the attorney general’s office says Reyes will facilitate introductions between interested parties and the HEXWAVE technology, and that beta testing for the product will likely start later this year.