



# ETHICAL ISSUES

## The T-Ray Machine and Personal Privacy

In January 2013, newspapers announced the New York Police Department's use of the T-Ray machine. The machine detects terahertz radiation, described as a high-frequency electromagnetic natural energy emitted by the human body. The T-Ray penetrates almost all materials except metal. The scanner image can show the outline of a hidden object such as a gun. In a public demonstration, the T-Ray scanner highlighted a plainclothes officer, who appeared neon green with a black gun shape. The machine, developed in collaboration with a security and surveillance company and the London Metropolitan Police, can be mounted on a truck and taken into violence-prone neighborhoods. This first-generation prototype is a multimillion-dollar device, but future technological advances may provide for a handheld, less costly model.

New York City has engaged in an aggressive and apparently successful campaign to reduce criminal

behavior. One method has been to employ stop-and-frisk searches.

### Think About It

Technology such as the T-Ray machine raises important ethical issues.

1. What are the pros and cons of each method described?
2. What due process concerns might arise because of the T-Ray?
3. Should the police be able to scan everyone on the streets as a means of reducing gun violence?
4. Does this crime-fighting tool violate expectations of privacy? Why or why not?

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Source: El-Ghobashy, T. (2013, January 23). Police tool targets guns. *Wall Street Journal*.