

Jacksonville PD updates info-exchange capabilities

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Offering new information-gathering capabilities while costing the city nothing, the Jacksonville Police Department is understandably excited about the installation of their new Texas Data Exchange computer system.

The program, which was recently transferred from the Texas Office of Homeland Security to the Texas Department of Public Safety's Crime Records Service, compiles incident records and other criminal justice information into a central repository for data sharing across jurisdictional lines.

"It takes the information in our computer system and sends it to a central repository where it can be assessed by criminal justice agencies online all over the United States," Police Chief Reece Daniel said. "This program goes in and uploads all your information automatically, so we don't need to have a person actually inputting anything into it. Other agencies then have access to our information and we have that same access to the files of all the other agencies on the system as well."

Daniel said the new system will complement the National Crime Information Center database which JPD already uses. TDEx will allow access to offense reports from other departments, something they could not easily get in the past.

The new system is also highly automated, supplying some information automatically, whereas a human user must actively search the NCIC database to gain that same info.

"Let's say we input the name of a man with Jacksonville warrants into the system. If that man is arrested in Dallas for something, the program will send us an e-mail letting us know that this is something we might want to look into," Daniel said. "Even if the person isn't a perfect match, if they fall within certain parameters, it will notify us.

"Now say that person was arrested in Dallas and gave a false name, the program would still send us an e-mail automatically because he has the same fingerprint class, height and age of the person we are looking for."

Along with numerous other search applications, TDEx also allows member agencies to pull up recent mugshots from another department, helpful in keeping up-to-date on a suspect's physical appearance. The system also catalogs pictures of distinctive features like birthmarks and tattoos.

Marian Lindsey, communications supervisor for JPD, said the program constantly uploads updated records so the system always has the most recent information available. Lindsey will be acting as agency administrator for JPD's TDEx program.

“It is a secure Web site through DPS. Only people who we have given a password can use it, and only from approved e-mail addresses on a secure server, so I don’t believe security will be a problem,” she said.

The program became operational Thursday morning at JPD, and after spending some time reading the manual, Lindsey said TDEx is able to do even more than originally thought. She said the only price tag associated with the new system will be the “electricity cost to run the computer.”

According to Daniel, he first heard about TDEx at an International Association of Chiefs of Police conference last year in New Orleans.

“I talked to someone down there about it, and when they e-mailed me again four weeks ago we started looking into it to determine if it was something we could use. Marian investigated it, and we decided it would be an excellent program for this department,” he said.

The chief said he couldn’t argue with the price.

“DPS installed it; they replace it, and they do all of the maintenance. The only thing we have to do is allow them to add our information to their central database,” Daniel said. “It is fairly sophisticated software; for something that is not costing the city a penny, it is a pretty amazing tool.”

About 400 law enforcement agencies are already connected to the TDEx network, and more are being added each day.