



## Crimetracker - Keeping track of Utah's sex offenders



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SALT LAKE CITY (ABC 4 News) - The number of registered sex offenders continues to rise, and police are doing their best to keep a good eye on them.

Right now, Utah is home to more than 6,500 convicted sex offenders, and according to authorities there is hardly a neighborhood anywhere in the state where you will not find at least one of them living there. To keep possible problems from getting out of control, Unified Police do regular verification checks on paroled sex offenders.

"If we had a child abduction situation, we know where these people live," said Unified Police Detective Peggy Falkner. "We know a lot of their habits. We know what they drive."

They also warn, however, with numbers like that, it is impossible to guarantee offenders will not fall through the cracks in the system. One team of seven police officers are in charge of watching more than 150 offenders in Salt Lake County.

"We throw out that net and catch as many people who come back in as we can," said Steve Gerke, of the Department of Corrections. He said he believes they have enough people to keep it under control. "That compliance rate is big to us."

Utah tops the nations for states with the most registered sex offenders present and accounted for at 93%. But Gerke warns we should not let our guard down just because of that statistic. He said there are still predators out there who are not yet on the registry. "I think parents need to not use the registry as a feel-good issue."

Officials said if parents just focus on register offenders moving into their neighborhood, they ignore a greater risk. "I think they need to look at all the unknown sex offenders in their neighborhoods that we have yet to identify that could be potential risks to their children," said Scott McCullough, Head of one of Utah's Sex offender task force.

McCullough said the most effective protections for your children are parental vigilance and supervision. "I think it's more important to know who your children are around. What kind of individuals are taking interest in your children, that maybe not have a real

legitimate reason?"

If you're a parent who wants to know if any register sex offenders live in your neighborhood. Visit <http://corrections.utah.gov/services/sonar.html>.

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