



Notification system will help crime victims

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An automated notification system that keeps track of offenders on Hawaii's state prison rolls should provide some reassurance to crime victims that they will be informed about the status of lawbreakers.

The Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification program, to be launched in February, also will allow other interested parties, such as lawyers and offenders' family members, to receive timely information about transfers, probation, escapes and releases.

Victims of crimes often are surprised to learn that perpetrators have been released, paroled or have escaped. Through the new service, data will be updated every seven minutes and linked to a network in 42 states that will automatically notify crime victims and others who register about a prisoner's status. Interested people can choose notification by phone or e-mail, or they can check via phone or online.

Notifications also will go out when an offender is returned to custody, has a parole hearing, when decisions on paroles are made, when warrants are issued or when an offender dies.

The network is primarily aimed at victims, but state Department of Public Safety officials say it could be useful to family members who have lost contact with an offender, lawyers, government and law enforcement agencies.

Because many crime victims are tourists from Japan, the information will be translated from English about a month after start-up, and might be offered in Korean and Ilocano later on.