

Inmate database helps officers track offenders

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Troopers at Kentucky State Police Post 1 near Hickory turned to the new "Who's In Jail" database this week to help their search for a man wanted on an outstanding warrant from the mid-1990s.

The man was believed to be serving time in a jail somewhere in the South, so troopers used JusticeXchange — a computer network that tracks inmates in all Kentucky jails as well as nearly half the jails nationwide. It revealed that he has not been incarcerated, enabling state police to focus their search elsewhere, said Trooper Barry Meadows, Post 1 spokesman.

"It's a very helpful tool and the more technological advantages that we have, the better we can find these people and protect our citizens," Meadows said. "It's new, but we already use it on a daily basis. It's also been a big help in tracking sex offenders."

JusticeXchange tracks all state and local jail populations in Kentucky, and 43 percent of county jail populations throughout the country. It includes records from 27 states.

The instant access can reduce the time needed to conduct a search, Meadows said. Before the introduction of the Web site, Post 1 troopers would have had to call each county jail, or log on to those having Web sites.

Although the network became available to law enforcement agencies less than a week ago, the JusticeXchange Web site was introduced Wednesday by Lt. Gov. Steve Pence. The secure Web site posts current and background information on all offenders, including charges, photographs and behavior reports. Kentucky is one of seven states that launched a statewide JusticeXchange system. The other states are Arkansas, New York, Washington, Utah, Texas, and Florida.

Paducah Police Chief Randy Bratton also sees the Web site as a valuable resource in tracking people who have criminal charges in more than one county.

"This program should prove very beneficial for investigators," Bratton said. "Frequently, subjects in custody in another jurisdiction are suspects in crimes in our jurisdiction and vice versa."

The JusticeXchange system has already marked successes here in Kentucky, according to Jason Keller, chief public affairs officer for the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security. The Louisville Metro Police Department had four felony warrants out for the arrest of a man wanted on gun and drug charges. By using the JusticeXchange, officers discovered he was being held in Oldham County on lesser charges and was close to release. Police served felony warrants on the man before he was released, Keller said.