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New Ordinance for pawn shop reporting system aims to help track down stolen property



- Lubbock police say property crimes are on the rise. The numbers for all property crimes, especially home burglaries in Lubbock increased in the past few months, so police asked the City Council to consider a new ordinance aimed at pawn shop records. They hope it will help them get information more efficiently.

Every week, members of the Lubbock Police Department's Property Crimes Unit spend hours picking up information from every pawn shop in town. Then a clerk spends several days entering all the information into a data system. Sergeant Mark Wims is one of the guys who has to wait to get that information. "The limited man power we have in the unit can be better used investigating crimes," said Wims.

However, they take the time to do this each week in order to track down stolen items in pawn and resale shops. "I won't say it occurs on a daily basis, but fairly regularly something will show up," he said.

Wims thinks a new city ordinance would speed up the process. "What this does is free up our detectives to do investigations. It provides that information almost instantaneously. It's an overnight transfer, so we have the information available the next day rather than anywhere from a week to 10 days later," he said.

The police department would contract a company called **LeadsOnline** to compile the data for them. Another benefit for LPD is this company searches a wider base than just Lubbock. "If a stolen item leaves Lubbock then it's very difficult to get information on it if it's been pawned. This gives us a nationwide data base to be able to search for items that may have gone to surrounding cities like Amarillo, Plainview, Midland, Odessa," says Wims.

Pawn shop owners say they'll support the new system as long as it doesn't cost them any money. "My concern would be as a small business is this going to cost us anything extra. We're in tough economic times, and hopefully it would not," said Scott Smith of Swat Loans Inc.

If approved, the ordinance would go into effect sometime in the next few months, and police hope it will help them crack down on the growing number of burglaries in the Hub City. Thursday, the Lubbock City Council will hear the first reading of the ordinance.



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