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Lubbock fights Copper Theft



CRIME/Re-salers, pawn shops to switch to electronic reporting

Police believe it will be easier to catch a crook in three months.

The Lubbock City Council passed an ordinance Monday morning that requires local pawn shops and other re-sale businesses to report transactions electronically.

Police said the new reporting system should be fully functional within 90 days.

Police officials believe electronic reporting would save a lot of law enforcement time, taxpayer money and help solve more crimes.

Officials say the current method of reviewing paper sales slips as a way to look for stolen property is inefficient and outdated. Officers pick up the paper sales slips each week, and then a civilian employee enters the information manually into a local database.

The electronic reports will go directly into a national database - called **LeadsOnline** - that any participating law enforcement agency can search for stolen property. The database includes nearly 4,000 shops nationwide and has more than 160 million records, according to its Web site.

The council approved the first reading of the ordinance last month, but tabled a second vote during its last meeting because metal recycling companies opposed the ordinance.

Sgt. Robert Ferguson, who spearheaded efforts to get the ordinance, said some minor changes were made to the ordinance regarding second-hand scrap metal dealers and metal recycling entities. He said he believed the metal shops and the police department struck a balance and the department was pleased with the ordinance.

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