

Columbus soon will have it's most effective tool for combating metal theft



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COLUMBUS SOON will have its most effective tool for combating metal theft: an electronic reporting system to be used by scrap-metal yards that will give police easy access to records of daily metal purchases. The city selected a software vendor on Nov. 18, and that company, **LeadsOnline**, will install the searchable, Web-based computer program early next year, then train detectives to use it.

LeadsOnline should be a huge timesaver. Police receive hundreds of records a day on paper, which isn't conducive to searching for a particular item or tracking patterns in thefts. The program will allow scrap yards to scan metal sellers' driver's licenses and record digital images of their fingerprints. The cost to businesses should be minimal, as long as the scrap yard already has a computer.

The 18-month process of crafting an ordinance and implementing it has improved communication between city officials, police and scrap-metal dealers. The Columbus Division of Police and Councilman Andrew Ginther deserve much of the credit for creatively tackling a crime that has threatened people's safety, while causing significant financial losses to residents and businesses.

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