

Keeping YOUR Cutting Edge *Sharp*

by Bryan Wolfe, Indiana Homeland Security - 7/20/09

For this installment of the Journal, we will present a paper submitted by Bryan Wolfe from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. Bryan is a law enforcement officers, fire fighter and communications officer. He examines new technology that has a direct impact on a street officer's ability to perform his or her job efficiently.

Technology changes so rapidly that even the most fiscally enriched private corporations struggle to stay in front of the "techno-curve." Cash-strapped local units of government often find themselves playing catch-up. Regardless of whether your public safety agency is Law Enforcement, Fire, Emergency Medical, or Intelligence related, it is imperative that your agency's front line personnel and policymakers maintain awareness of available technology which affects your business niche. Two specific companies have made extravagant strides in assisting public safety to jump ahead of perpetrators. Awareness of this type of available technology can both recover Hoosier's stolen property expeditiously and potentially save lives.

Many are familiar with the company **On Star**, a subsidiary of General Motors. Many vehicles carrying labels of Chevrolet, Buick, Pontiac, GMC, Saturn, Hummer, Saab, and Cadillac have had On Star capability since 2007. Since its inception, On Star has been involved in the recovery of thousands of stolen vehicles. On Star has made a transition from analog to digital technology, and has continued notable product development resulting in new features and services which save lives.

On the morning hours of April 20, 2009, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department received a call reporting that a 2008 Chevrolet Pick-up truck was just stolen in the IMPD South-west District. About ten minutes passed before the citizen remembered that he had On Star in their vehicle. The citizen called 888-4ON-STAR and spoke with representatives, who located the vehicle utilizing GPS technology and called IMPD to report its position. Officers were then quickly dispatched to the area but were unable to locate the vehicle. On Star dispatchers then activated the horn and flashing exterior lights on the vehicle. Officers quickly located the vehicle in a backyard off an alleyway, and a foot chase of a male occupant followed soon afterwards. The suspect was quickly apprehended in a nearby abandoned home.

An exciting new feature that dispatchers, officers, and policymakers should be aware of is that on all 2009 and newer On Star equipped vehicles a new *standard* feature called "Stolen Vehicle Slowdown" has been added. Upon receiving a report of an automobile theft, On Star will call the appropriate law enforcement agency to notify them of the vehicle's current location. Once an officer has the stolen vehicle in sight, On Star can confirm that it is the proper vehicle by flashing the exterior lights on the vehicle. Upon confirmation, law enforcement can then notify On Star when they are at a safe location with appropriate manpower to initiate a felony stop. On Star can then "remove acceleration and gradually slow the vehicle."

Another techno-savvy product that is a friend to public safety is called "**Computrace: Lo Jack for Laptops**," by Absolute Software. For as little as a one-time fee of \$39.95, users simply install the provided software onto their laptop. Corporate research indicates that stolen laptop computers are generally quickly connected to the Internet. Once a computer with Lo Jack for

Laptops is connected to the Internet, the installed software allows Lo Jack technicians to covertly find the location of the computer, and notify the appropriate law enforcement agency to initiate recovery. Often times instead of pawning a laptop computer, suspects sell them on the street. Without a program installed like Lo Jack for Laptops, law enforcement would have no way to locate this property until it is pawned. In the event that the laptop cannot be located, another option offered to customers is the ability for Lo Jack technicians to remotely delete sensitive hard drive data stored on the computer, eliminating the possibility and potential liability of Identity Theft related issues.

Techno-savvy abilities such as Stolen Vehicle Slowdown and Lo Jack for Laptops give public safety officials more tools for our virtual crime-fighting tool belt. It is critical that your agency stay abreast of new technological options. Consider inviting the individual in your agency who stays up to speed on technology to attend an occasional staff meeting to address advances which might need to be incorporated into your department policy manual. Knowing in advance what technology is available for your public safety field will keep responders and civilians safer, allow for a more expedient recovery of property, and improve the public perception of your agency.

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