New View for AMBER

A child is reported missing every 40 seconds.

Seventy-four percent of the abducted children who are murdered are dead within 3 hours of the abduction.

Time is an abducted child’s greatest enemy.

*From the AmberView website at www.amberview.org

The above statistics illustrate one of parents’ greatest fears—abduction of their child. During the past 10 years, the AMBER Alert program has begun to change those statistics by serving as a key tool for locating and returning missing children to their families.

The AMBER Alert early warning system, a voluntary partnership between law enforcement agencies and the media created in 1996, provides information to the public as quickly as possible following verification that a child is missing or abducted. Time and again, AMBER Alert has proven its value by helping to return children to their families. Success, however, does not preclude improvement.

AMBER Alert presently lacks the technology to instantaneously mass broadcast a high-resolution, three-dimensional photo to law enforcement and the media within minutes of an abduction. In addition, available descriptions and photos of the missing child, key to an AMBER Alert, often are vague or outdated and reach their destinations too slowly.

To enhance AMBER Alert, a new technology called AmberView is being developed through the West Virginia High Technology Consortium (WVHTC) Foundation in Fairmont, West Virginia, in conjunction with and funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The WVHTC Foundation is a nonprofit organization focusing on the regional and statewide growth of high-tech businesses.

The basic necessities of daily hygiene—a razor and a toothbrush—too often become the basic necessities of armed assault in the hands of correctional inmates. Through the efforts of a research team from the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (APL), these items soon may become just toiletries again.

As part of a National Institute of Justice (NIJ)-sponsored project called “Improving Correctional Officer Safety: Reducing Inmate Weapons,” an APL team has devised and developed prototype toothbrushes and razors that cannot be modified into weapons. The overall goal of the project is to improve safety in the correctional environment by reducing the number of improvised weapons “manufactured” within facilities.

“Inmates improvise weapons out of a number of common objects, including, but not limited to, toothbrushes and razors,” says Paul Biermann, a member of the senior professional staff. “Metal strips from bunks, fences, or food service carts become dangerous. Inmates use concrete floors to sharpen objects, and may use contraband matches to partially melt down plastic items so that razor blades can be attached to form slashing weapons.”
Drug and Alcohol Testing
Monitoring the Sex Offender
Management Issues

To date, more than 240 children have been successfully recovered through AMBER Alert. In October 2002, President Bush hosted the first-ever White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children. Following the 2002 White House Conference, the Attorney General appointed the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) for the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) to serve as the national AMBER Alert Coordinator. OJP AAG Regina B. Schofield currently serves as the Coordinator.

“The pilot experienced no roadblocks and received much cooperation and enthusiasm from parents, schools, and children,” Chico says. “Schools opened their doors to allow the image captures. Law enforcement officials embraced the program and fully backed the launch of the pilot as evidenced by their active participation, attendance, and positive comments. The pilot’s success is a direct result of the hard work and the cooperation of academia, law enforcement, and the media who joined forces to return a child to the safety of its family.”

Actual implementation of AmberView within West Virginia began in August 2005. This included development of the AmberView website and establishment of the secure image repository at the WVHTC Foundation. Repository access, Chico notes, is restricted to the State AMBER Alert coordinator. “This next phase of AmberView is expected to take approximately 15 months to complete,” he says, “and we plan to expand the system throughout the Nation in future phases.”

For more information about AmberView, contact Robert Chico at the WVHTC Foundation, 304-366-2577 or richico@wvhtf.org, or visit www.amberview.org. More information about AMBER Alert can be accessed at www.amberalert.gov. For information on the WVHTC Foundation, visit www.wvhtf.org.

AMBER Facts

- The AMBER Alert System began in 1996, in Texas, when Dallas-Fort Worth broadcasters teamed with local police to develop an early warning system to help find abducted children.
- AMBER stands for America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response. The name was created as a legacy to 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, who was kidnapped while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas, and then brutally murdered.
- Other States and communities began setting up their own AMBER plans as the idea was adopted across the Nation. However, from 1996 to 2001, development and implementation of AMBER plans throughout the country was not considered significant. At the end of 2001, only four States had statewide AMBER plans. Now, all 50 States have statewide AMBER plans in place.
- To date, more than 240 children have been successfully recovered through AMBER Alert.
- In October 2002, President Bush hosted the first-ever White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children. Following the 2002 White House Conference, the Attorney General appointed the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) for the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) to serve as the national AMBER Alert Coordinator. OJP AAG Regina B. Schofield currently serves as the Coordinator.

The 7th Annual Innovative Technologies for Community Corrections Conference will spotlight the innovative use of technology in community corrections as well as technologies on the horizon. A vendor exposition where attendees can interact with technology providers will be available.

Tentative Topics:

- Drug and Alcohol Testing
- Electronic Supervision
- Info Tech Applications
- Monitoring the Sex Offender
- Management Issues

For more information, visit the conference website at www.nlectc.org/training/commcorr.html. Questions can be directed to Joe Russo, 800–416–8086, ext. 15, or jrusso@du.edu.

Hosted by the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center-Rocky Mountain, a Program of the National Institute of Justice.

Innovative Technologies
for Community Corrections
Conference

June 12–14, 2006
Sheraton Atlanta Hotel
Atlanta, Georgia

Registration Fee:
Through April 30 – $150
On or after May 1 – $175

Get the latest news and information about the use of technology in the field of community corrections through a monthly e-mail newsletter published by the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC–Rocky Mountain).

Subscribing is free and easy. Just go to http://justnet.org/training/commcorr.html and sign up.

Previous newsletters have covered information on drug and alcohol testing, electronic monitoring, information technology, training opportunities, and sex offender management. These issues can be viewed at http://justnet.org/nlectcrm/publications.html.

For additional information about the e-mail newsletter and other community corrections initiatives sponsored by NLECTC–Rocky Mountain, contact Joe Russo, 800–416–8086, ext. 15, or jrusso@du.edu.
Developing a Toothbrush and Razor That Could Not Be Modified to Cause Physical Harm Presented a Challenge to APL, Which is More Accustomed to Working on Items Such as Submarine Components or Biomedical Devices.

11-member working group composed of representatives from State and local facilities, the Bureau of Prisons, and representatives from NIJ’s National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center system to help analyze historical and survey information and identify potential solutions to the problem. The APL team also toured several correctional facilities. Currently, the team is searching for a commercialization partner to bring those products to market.

More Than Toothbrushes and Razors
Developing a toothbrush and razor that could not be modified to cause physical harm presented a challenge to APL, which is more accustomed to working on items such as submarine components or biomedical devices, Biermann says. But, it is not the only project of benefit to corrections and law enforcement in which APL is involved. APL is also working on a realistic, affordable model of a human torso that can accurately measure the effects of a serious blow to the heart, lungs, and other vital body parts. It is designed to measure the blunt force trauma inflicted behind soft body armor when it stops a gunshot or a nonlethal weapon strike.

Current approved body armor testing standards call for placing a vest on a test fixture filled with clay conditioned to specific tolerances. If a bullet makes an indentation in the clay deeper than 44 millimeters, or approximately 1.75 inches, the vest fails testing even though the round did not penetrate the vest. However, this type of test does not provide information on just how the impact affects internal organs or other body parts.

The prototype torso is made of reasonably inexpensive materials that are readily available commercially. APL staff members have created a computerized counterpart that will present a 3-D simulation chart of pressure waves and how they affect areas such as the heart, lungs, cartilage, and spine. The team also is working on refinements and improvements to the torso prototype. The project, which began as an independent research and development effort, is now receiving funding from the Office of Naval Research.

For more information on the prototype toiletries for corrections or prototype torso projects, contact Paul Biermann at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, paul.biermann@jhuapl.edu.
The National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) system, a program of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), offers no-cost assistance in helping agencies large and small implement current and emerging technologies.

The NLECTC system was established in 1994 by NIJ’s Office of Science and Technology to serve as an “honest broker” resource for technology information, assistance, and expertise by providing information and technology assistance to the Nation’s more than 18,000 police departments; 50 State correctional systems; thousands of prisons, jails, and parole and probation departments; and other public safety organizations.

With a network of regional centers and specialty offices located across the country, the NLECTC system delivers expertise in a number of technologies in partnership with a host organization. In addition, a number of technology working groups and a national advisory council provide guidance relating to the technology needs and operational requirements of the public safety community for each of NIJ’s technology focus areas.

Contact NLECTC for:

- Technology Identification
- Technology Assistance
- Technology Implementation
- Property Acquisition
- Equipment Testing
- Technology Demonstration
- Technology Commercialization
- Technology Needs Assessment

Technology Demonstration
We introduce and demonstrate new and emerging technologies through such special events, conferences, and practical demonstrations as the Mock Prison Riot (technologies for corrections) and an annual public safety technology conference. On a limited basis, NLECTC facilitates deployment of new technologies to agencies for operational testing and evaluation.

Capacity Building
We provide hands-on demonstrations of the latest technologies to address such operational issues as crime and intelligence analysis, geographic information systems, explosives detection and disablement, inmate disturbances and riots, and computer crime investigation.

Technology Information
NLECTC disseminates information to the criminal justice community at no cost through educational bulletins, equipment performance reports, guides, consumer product lists, news summaries, meeting/conference reports, videotapes, and CD-ROMs. NLECTC also publishes TechBeat, an award-winning quarterly newsmagazine. Most publications are available in electronic form through the Justice Technology Information Network (JUSTNET) at www.justnet.org. Hard copies of all publications can be ordered through NLECTC’s toll-free number, 800–248–2742, or via e-mail at asknlectc@nlectc.org.

Technology Commercialization
Our law enforcement and corrections professionals—the Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Advisory Council (LECTAC)—ensures that we are focusing on the real-world needs of public safety agencies.

Because most of the country’s law enforcement and corrections services are provided at the local level, the NLECTC system is composed of five regional centers and is complemented by several specialty offices and a national center. Most centers and offices are located with or supported by federally funded technology partners so they can leverage unique science and engineering expertise.

Border Research and Technology Center (BRTC)
1010 Second Avenue, Suite 1920
San Diego, CA 92101–4912
888–656–2792
info@brtc.nlectc.org

Rural Law Enforcement Technology Center (RULETC)
101 Bulldog Lane
Hazard, KY 41701
866–787–2553
ruletc@nafmil.com

Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization (OLETC)
2001 Main Street, Suite 500
Wheeling, WV 26003
888–306–5382
info@oletc.org

Office of Law Enforcement Standards (OLES)
100 Bureau Drive, Stop 8102
Building 220, Room 8208
Gothenburg, NE 69731
308–397–2674
oles@fnit.gov
In addition to TECHshorts, an online, weekly technology news summary containing articles relating to technology developments in public safety that have appeared in newspapers, newsmagazines, and trade and professional journals is available through the NLECTC system’s website, JUSTNET, at www.justnet.org. This service, the Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology News Summary, also is available through an electronic e-mail list, JUSTNETNews. Each week, subscribers to JUSTNETNews receive the news summary directly via e-mail. To subscribe to JUSTNETNews, e-mail your request to asknle@nlectc-nc.org or call 800–248–2742.

Note: The mentioning of specific manufacturers or products in TECHshorts does not constitute the endorsement of the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, or the NLECTC system.

WHO Is It?

Law enforcement operations are an information-intensive process. Agencies are called on to collect and interpret large datasets in their efforts to serve and protect and at the same time maintain trust and reliability. When it comes to integrating, correlating, and interpreting identity theft crime data between Internet sources and traditional law enforcement databases, the law enforcement process has encountered technical, managerial, and sociological barriers. A part of the National Institute of Justice’s electronic crime research initiative, Project WIFI involves the development of a modular framework for the management, analysis, and visualization of identity theft crime data stored in standoff databases and the Internet. This framework will enhance the efficiency with which law enforcement can manage identity theft crime regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Project WIFI also will aim to better understand the role of computers in the commission of identity theft crimes, whether that be as a target of criminal activity, a medium or buffer between offenders and victims, and/or as a facilitator to enable communications between offenders. For more information about Project WIFI, contact Erin Kenneally, 858–822–0991 or erinn@ucsd.edu.

'Russian' To Get the Phone

Contraband cell phones being used to carry out criminal activity from correctional facilities is not only a problem in the United States but also in the Russian Federation. As part of a wider evaluation of available Russian public safety technologies, representatives from NLECTC–Southeast and NLECTC–Northwest traveled to Moscow last September to examine a cell phone detection device, meet with the manufacturers, tour the production shop, and receive operation instructions.

Two of the devices (nonlinear junction detectors), which emit a low-wattage 800 MHz signal, have been brought to the United States for further testing and field evaluations. According to Russian sources, more than 70 of the devices are in use in their country’s correctional facilities. Additionally, it is reported that in St. Petersburg just two devices identified 600 concealed cell phones over 6 months. For additional information, contact Rob Donlin at NLECTC–Southeast, 800–292–4385 or donlin@nlectc-se.org, or Bruce Richter, NLECTC–Northwest, 866–569–2969 or bruce.richter@csu.edu. In addition, the Bureau of Prisons’ National Institute of Justice and Naval Warfare Center–Dahlgren are collaborating on a multiyear project to evaluate the problem of contraband cell phones in correctional facilities and potential technical solutions. View the

honeybees as a means to detect land mines. According to Wayne Barte, project manager at the Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization (OLETC), that same response also could be elicited to help law enforcement officers detect drugs, other contraband, or even bodies. Barte says Bromenshenk has been involved in research with honeybees for more than 30 years. Recently, he used a grant from the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency’s Controlled Biological and Bioimimetic Systems Program to perform extensive and successful field tests involving land mine detection. With an eye toward eventually commercializing his methods, Bromenshenk has attended an OLETC Commercialization Planning Workshop* and received other commercialization assistance as well.

Although Bromenshenk does not intend for the bees to completely replace dogs or humans, these bees do have some advantages. Honeybees, he says, can be trained in 24 to 48 hours to associate a certain odor with receiving sugar syrup and can go many places that dogs or humans cannot. For example, bees can fly low over minefields and gather in concentrated swarms over mines, whereas a human or a dog might trigger an explosion. For more information, contact Wayne Barte, 888–306–5382 or wbarte@oletc.org.

Threat Based Asset Management System... Honestly

In its role as honest broker, NLECTC–Northeast in Rome, New York, is serving as a technical advisor to the New York State Office of Homeland Security in the development of its Threat Based Asset Management System. The Northeast Center’s assistance includes concept development, system architecture, functional requirements, performance specifications, and requests for information. The asset management system will connect the State’s private/public and government/nongovernment entities involved in critical infrastructure protection and assess threats, prioritize risks, and deploy homeland security resources for funding, personnel, and equipment. Additionally, based on the existing threat level, the system will propose a solution by analyzing the State’s critical infrastructure asset data, asset vulnerability assessments, risk evaluation, and daily threat intelligence. This information will be electronically disseminated to the State’s Office of Homeland Security and various first responder agencies. For more information about the support provided by NLECTC–Northeast to the Threat Based Asset Management System, contact Maureen Regan or Debra Cutler, 888–338–0584, or e-mail maureen@dolphitch.com or debra@dolphitch.com, respectively.

4 out of 5 cops were very pleased with last year’s NIJ Annual Conference.

Come find out why.

The NIJ Conference 2006

July 17–19, Washington, DC

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.justnet.org or www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij

National Institute of Justice
U.S. Department of Justice

Mention “free food” and you will get most people’s attention. Dr. Jerry Bromenshenk of the University of Montana and Bee Alert Technologies has been researching how to put a similar response in

Technology News Summary
All About TechBeat

TechBeat is the award-winning newsmagazine of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) system. Our goal is to keep you up to date with current and developing technologies for the public safety community, as well as other research and development efforts within the Federal Government and private industry. TechBeat is published four times a year.

Individual Subscriptions: TechBeat is available at no cost. If you are not currently on our mailing list, please call us at 800–248–2742, fax 301–519–5149, or e-mail us at asknlectc@nlectc.org.

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Awards: TechBeat has received numerous awards, including the 1998 Best of Category, Excellence in Printing Award from the Printing & Graphic Communications Association; the first-place 1998 Blue Pencil Award for Most Improved Periodical from the National Association of Government Communicators; the 1999 Silver Inkwell Award of Merit from the International Association of Business Communicators; and the APEX 2001 Award of Excellence for Magazines and Newspapers–Printed.

Photo Credits: Photos used in this issue of TechBeat copyright © 2005 Alamy; Arresting Images; Copshots–Guy Wolfe; Corbis Images; Digital Vision; Photodisc; www.amberview.org; and Meth=Death CD-ROM.

Staff: Managing Editor, Rick Neimiller; Editor, Michele Coppola; Assistant Editor/Writer, Brian Higgins; Lead Writer, Becky Lewis; Graphic Designers, C. Denise Collins and Tina Kramer.
Human Transporters, called HTs for short, have been on the commercial market for the past several years. During that time they have found their way into mail and package delivery, warehouse management, and city tour companies. They also have found their way into the public safety arena.

In March 2003, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) tasked several of the centers that comprise its National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) system to initiate a program that loans HTs to law enforcement and corrections agencies and to collect information about their experiences.

The HTs used in the evaluation program were provided by Segway™, which was responsible for the development of the original HT. In brief, Segway HTs use two wheels running side-by-side and self-balancing electronic gyroscopes to keep a standing rider upright. They have no throttle or brake; forward and backward movements are controlled by the lean of the rider. The farther a rider leans forward, the faster the Segway HT travels forward, although three keys limit the rider to maximum speeds of 6, 8, or 12.5 mph. Turns are controlled by a rotating left handle grip. A power assist mode allows the rider to move the HT up and down stairs.

Three Segway models were used in the evaluation: the basic HT model (i Series), the e Series model, and the p Series model. The basic HT model has a platform that is 25 inches wide, 19 inches long, and 8 inches high. It weighs 83 pounds, can carry a rider weighing up to 250 pounds, and has a range of 5 to 15 miles per battery charge. The e Series comes with a set of saddlebags, can carry a total of 70 pounds of cargo, and has a self-balancing capability, negating the need for a kickstand. (Both the i Series and p Series have kickstands.) The p Series is smaller and lighter and designed to easily navigate in congested pedestrian environments.

Fifteen HTs were loaned to 18 State, local, and university law enforcement departments; correctional facilities; and public safety agencies to use outdoors, indoors, in crowded conditions, and on perimeter patrol. Officers operated them on surfaces that included asphalt, stairs, concrete, grass, gravel, dirt, rocks, and mud.

NIJ requested its Border Research and Technology Center (BRTC) in San Diego, California, to compile the results. What emerged from the evaluation was one common theme that ran through almost every agency’s comments, according to Chris Aldridge, BRTC director. HTs are a great public relations tool, with citizens often stopping officers to ask questions and praise their law enforcement efforts. Specific comments included:

• “When a police cruiser drives down a block in some neighborhoods, the crowds scatter. When the [HT] travels down the same street, people approach . . . and want to talk to the officer.”

• “It is an outstanding community policing tool. Everyone wanted to see it. I mean everyone! Citizens even offered to donate funds to make sure the department could purchase units of its own.”

• “There was widespread community interest and acceptance, as well as media interest that translated into positive news coverage.”

• “The biggest benefit was our ability to start conversations with the general public. People from 4 to 94 were amazed by the technology . . . I have been in or around law enforcement since 1975. Bar none, [they] are the greatest community policing tool I’ve ever seen.”

• “In addition to its public relations value,” Aldridge says, “officers generally rated the HT as faster and less tiring than foot patrol, although slower than automobile response. Advantages compared with bicycles included safer mount/dismount, easier to negotiate through and to see over crowds, and less tiring for officers.

“Several agencies used it for perimeter patrol, in settings as diverse as correctional facilities and schools. These agencies found it to be fast, easy to use and maneuver, and adaptable to different operator skill levels. It allowed officers to move quickly inside buildings and the quiet motor gave a certain degree of stealth to patrols, even enabling them to make extra rounds during an 8-hour shift.”

While feedback for the most part was positive, Aldridge says, some agencies did have concerns. Those commonly voiced included the need for a stronger kickstand and a longer battery charge. The kickstand, he says, is designed with a breakaway feature intended to enhance safety, but this also makes it vulnerable to breaking by untrained officers or someone who jumps on a parked Segway. Also, because of concerns about securing units quickly after dismounting, some officers remained on the device while speaking to motorists or pedestrians. As for how long the battery retains a charge, that depends on rider weight, operating speed, tire pressure, terrain, and temperature. Maintaining proper tire pressure and recharging the battery during breaks or lunch are two ways to add to the life of the battery charge.

The addition of off-road tires would solve another concern—traction problems occasionally encountered on wet or gravel surfaces, although it was noted that severe weather conditions during the winter months in Alaska make HTs impractical for some outdoor uses. In addition, the cost, which can be as high as $4,000 to $6,000 depending on the model, seemed prohibitive to some agencies.

For more information about the Segway HT evaluation program, contact the Border Research and Technology Center, 888-656-2782 or info@brtc.nlectc.org. Also involved in the evaluation were NLECTC-National, Rockville, Maryland; NLECTC-Northeast, Anchorage, Alaska; NLECTC-Southeast, Charleston, South Carolina; and the Rural Law Enforcement Technology Center, Hazard, Kentucky. An article regarding NLECTC-Northwest’s efforts in the evaluation program appeared in the Winter 2004 edition of TechBeat. The article, “Making Way for Segway,” can be accessed at www.justnet.org/techbeat/winter2004.
The inability of public safety personnel from different agencies to talk with each other via their radio systems is a well-known, ongoing problem that has received much attention. Receiving less notice is the inability of information-sharing and database systems to communicate with each other.

However, with the advent of the Global Justice XML Data Model (GJXDM), agencies now have a tool to make communication between information-sharing and database systems easier. And making it easier for agencies to use GJXDM is an online publication titled Building Exchange Content Using the Global JXDM: A User Guide for Practitioners and Developers.

For the new user, this guide provides a background and overview of the development of GJXDM, a general enterprise architectural overview, and a baseline set of technical concepts derived from training material and documentation developed by Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), which played the principal role in developing the technical architecture for GJXDM. Terminology and concepts presented in the first module are explained in more technical detail as the modules advance, so that the new or nontechnical user can also advance, incrementally.

For the more experienced or technical user, the guide moves from the technical framework and takes the reader further into a methodology for defining the business requirements of the information exchange, as well as an information exchange package (IEP) development process guideline.

Nontechnical readers also will benefit by learning the basics of the GJXDM standard.

This user guide provides direction on complying with new special conditions language affecting grantees of the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Policymakers should consider incorporating information from this guide into their information technology planning and funding instruments.

Finally, this user guide provides information about GJXDM tools, resources, partners, terminology, and documentation.

Building Exchange Content Using the Global JXDM: A User Guide for Practitioners and Developers was prepared with funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance in collaboration with SEARCH, the National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics and with significant contributions by GTRI engineers. The guide is available at http://it.ojp.gov/documents/200506_gjxdm_building_exch_content_user_guide.pdf.

The National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center is supported by Cooperative Agreement #2005-MU-CX-K077 awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. Analyses of test results do not represent product approval or endorsement by the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice; the National Institute of Standards and Technology, U.S. Department of Commerce; or Aspen Systems Corporation. Points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Office for Victims of Crime.
With a quiet, matter-of-fact manner, a man tells his story of methamphetamine addiction. His appearance at first seems almost ordinary, yet somewhat disconcerting. It’s not until he recounts the night that he tried to shoot himself in the face that the viewer realizes the man’s face shows the effects of extensive plastic surgery.

This sobering account is just one of many from a CD-ROM titled Meth = Death, produced by the Putnam County (Tennessee) Health Department, the 13th Judicial District Drug Task Force, and Tennessee Tech University’s BusinessMedia Center. Putnam County, along with the National Institute of Justice’s (NIJ) Rural Law Enforcement Technology Center (RULETC), is distributing the educational CD at no cost.

“Meth = Death” uses video and graphics in an interactive format that targets a number of different audiences: police, sheriff, fire, emergency medical services, public works, real estate, hotel/retail, environment, courts, public health, treatment, hospitals, child services, educators, grades K–2, grades 3–4, grades 5–8, and grades 9–12. For most audiences, information is broken down into the categories of meth facts, meth lies, medical impact, financial impact, and testimonials. However, the sections for younger children include only video clips and games. The CD also includes a video clip montage titled “Community Action,” several games, stills from a poster contest, and a Get Help section that includes links and an overview.

When I first became a health educator, I worked in probation, and I saw how meth had hit Tennessee,” says Jerrod Wright of the Putnam County Health Department. He came up with the idea to create the CD, pulled together a cooperative effort involving several State agencies, polled numerous experts, and gathered information from numerous resources. Students from Monterey High School helped put together the youth portion of the curriculum, and Putnam County received funding through the 6th Congressional District and Bill Gibson, District Attorney General, 13th Judicial District Attorney’s Office.

Wright notes that although some of the information on the CD is specific to Tennessee, most of it is generic enough to be used anywhere. In addition to orders from 40 States, Putnam County has filled orders from Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. In all, Putnam County distributed 6,000 CDs in the first 3 months the tool was available and has received much positive feedback, including feedback from rehabilitation centers.

“So many people worked on this that I can’t possibly thank everybody. It was really a joint effort, and everyone did an excellent job,” Wright says. “It shows what a community can do when they get behind a project.”

Between June and August 2005, Maggard says, his Center distributed more than 1,300 copies free of charge to rural and small law enforcement agencies.

For more information about the Meth = Death CD-ROM, visit www.metheducation.com or contact the Rural Law Enforcement Technology Center, 866-787-2553 or ruletc@aol.com. Ordering information can be found on the website; however, material from the CD cannot be downloaded from the site.

For a comprehensive source of information about methamphetamine use and its physical and social consequences, visit MethResources.gov, a website sponsored by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The site provides information about publications and research, upcoming conferences, programs, funding, training and technical assistance, policies and legislation, and related links.
Messing with Meth

Methamphetamine unfortunately may be one of the most poorly understood drugs of abuse in the United States—possibly due to its entirely synthetic nature and its lower national profile compared to marijuana and cocaine.

However, according to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy—

- Methamphetamine abuse can lead to psychotic behavior including intense paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, and out-of-control rages that can result in violent episodes.
- Chronic users at times develop sores on their bodies from scratching at “crank bugs,” which describes the common delusion that bugs are crawling under the skin.
- Long-term use of methamphetamine may result in anxiety, insomnia, and addiction.
- Even after methamphetamine use is stopped, several withdrawal symptoms can occur, including depression, anxiety, fatigue, paranoia, aggression, and an intense craving for the drug.
- Psychotic symptoms can sometimes persist for months or years after use has ceased.
- Chronic methamphetamine abuse can result in inflammation of the heart lining and, for injecting drug users, damaged blood vessels and skin abscesses.
- Social and occupational connections progressively deteriorate for chronic methamphetamine users.
- Acute lead poisoning is a potential risk for methamphetamine abusers because of a common method of production that uses lead acetate as a reagent.
- Medical consequences of methamphetamine use can include cardiovascular problems such as rapid heart rate, irregular heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and stroke-producing damage to small blood vessels in the brain.
- Hyperthermia and convulsions can occur when a user overdoses and, if not treated immediately, can result in death.
- Research has shown that as much as 50 percent of the dopamine-producing cells in the brain can be damaged by prolonged exposure to relatively low levels of methamphetamine and that serotonin-containing nerve cells may be damaged even more extensively.
- Methamphetamine abuse during pregnancy can cause prenatal complications such as increased rates of premature delivery and altered neonatal behavior patterns, such as abnormal reflexes and extreme irritability, and may be linked to congenital deformities.
- Methamphetamine abuse, particularly by those who inject the drug and share needles, can increase users’ risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and hepatitis B and C.
- Methamphetamine is easily produced in clandestine laboratories or meth labs using a variety of ingredients available in stores. The manufacturing of methamphetamine is called “cooking.”
- Cooking a batch of meth can be very dangerous due to the fact that the chemicals used are volatile and the by-products are very toxic.
- Meth labs present a danger to the meth cook, the community surrounding the lab, and the law enforcement personnel who discover the lab.
- A Center for Disease Control and Prevention study on hazardous substance-release events found that methamphetamine labs caused injury to 79 first responders (police officers, firefighters, EMTs, and hospital personnel) in 14 States participating in the study. The most common injuries were respiratory and eye irritation, headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, and shortness of breath.
- In addition to the dangerous nature of methamphetamine production, the labs are often booby-trapped and workers are well armed.