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## **Santa Fe Introduces GPS Tracking Instead of Jail Time For Burglars**

Santa Fe has introduced a new system that tracks convicted burglars through GPS devices rather than putting them in jail. Police began monitoring the first offender last week.

The program will start with just five GPS devices to gauge its effectiveness and collect data.

Santa Fe Police Capt. Aric Wheeler told ABC News the idea for the program originated as an alternative to repetitive incarceration, which is expensive. It also did little to deter burglaries. Wheeler said that police would see an immediate spike in burglaries as soon as criminals got out of jail.

“We can’t arrest our way out of this problem. You have to come up with new and creative ways to deal with them,” Wheeler said.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Doug Couleur told ABC News the program targets individuals facing long sentences, those with a large number of burglary charges, or people who have a juvenile history. Prosecutors and police will work in conjunction with the offenders’ attorneys to evaluate their cases and agree if the individual should be included in the program.

Couleur says within the negotiations, there are multiple issues that must be agreed to by the defendant in order to uphold the constitutionality of the program.

“A person who goes into the program has to specifically consent to it because they waive any issues to unrestricted access to their data by police department,” Couleur said. A clause in the program mandates employment.

“They can contribute to society and they have to go out and get a job. We can reintegrate them into the community,” Wheeler said. “If they truly want to be rehabilitated and they know ‘Big Brother’ is watching them, I’m hoping they will be more reluctant to commit burglaries again.”

The anklets have two types of monitors, active and passive. Santa Fe police will track them passively, meaning the devices won't give live GPS data to police computers. However, if there is reason for suspicion, such as multiple burglaries reported in one area, or if a crime fits the monitored burglar's previous modes of operation, then police can send a request to the 3M, the GPS device company, to get the live locations so they can intervene.

"It comes down to police work," Wheeler said. "The great thing about it is we can activate them. If we have serious concern that they are committing burglary right now we can contact 3M and gain access."

The plan could also be beneficial for many cities and states struggling fiscally, as it could be a way to alleviate the financial toll of incarceration. It could also help the problem of jail overcrowding. These issues were major catalysts in initiating the plan.

"We are all suffering from overcrowding and incarceration is not getting any cheaper," Wheeler said. "This could be for a wide variety of crimes that are out there."

Couleur agreed, telling ABC News, "You can't put everyone in jails. There is no money for new jails and there are no beds in the jails. There have to be alternatives for jails and this is a pretty good one."

Not everyone thinks this is such a good alternative. Assistant Public Defender Joseph Campbell thinks defendants might not "really understand the full ramifications to what they are agreeing to."

"If this person picks up new charges through the monitoring program, as a defense attorney I am going to look at whether that initial plea was voluntarily and if they knew it could come back and hurt them," Campbell said.

However, Wheeler told ABC news he believes this is the "technology of the future," and thinks even though it is still in its preliminary stages, the program has a lot of potential.

"I think it will continue to grow and move forward," he said.