

ALERT program to send inmate e-mails daily

E-mail to list jail releases

Glodis' ALERT program aims to help police

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WEST BOYLSTON — Beginning tomorrow, local police chiefs will have a better idea of what convicts may be returning to their communities, under an information-sharing program the sheriff's office has developed.

Called ALERT, the program will tell police departments which inmates are being released from the Worcester County Jail and House of Cor-

rection, where they are going and who they may be affiliating with.

Sheriff Guy W. Glodis is branding the program the latest tool his office is using to better communicate with police departments and serve more in a law enforcement role.

"The ALERT program will make it much easier for local officers to track sex offenders, drug dealers and violent criminals once they leave prison," the sheriff said. "By making

this information available as quickly as possible, local police can stay one step ahead of repeat offenders."

Under the program, at 5 a.m. each day the jail will send a mass e-mail notifying Worcester County police departments of the inmates who were released within the previous 24 hours. The list will name inmates incarcerated after being convicted of a crime, but not anyone awaiting trial. On

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average, 30 sentenced inmates are released each day.

The e-mails will include the inmates' names, ages and last known addresses, places they may be staying, identifying characteristics such as tattoos or scars, and gang affiliations. The sheriff's office also is working to create a program that will single out sex offenders, to help police learn more about their pasts and make sure they register as state law requires.

The list will include the convicted inmates' criminal history, which local

police say will serve as an investigatory tool in their own communities.

"Any time a dangerous felon or dangerous person is being released into a community, the police department should know about it," said Northbridge police Lt. Walter Warchol.

He said officers could use the information for their own safety. He recalls an incident in which police responding to a domestic call found out about a suspect's violent past only after officers were forced to wrestle him to the ground. Later, after booking him, the officers realized he had a history of assault on police officers, and he had

been released from jail only a month earlier.

Lt. Warchol said having such information beforehand could help police better prepare for any incident in which there's a possibility of violence.

"This is long overdue," he said.

Shrewsbury Police Chief A. Wayne Sampson said the list also could serve as a better law enforcement tool, helping investigators determine whether a recently released inmate is a suspect in a recent crime.

For instance, a town probing a rash of burglaries could check the list and see if an inmate with a history of bur-

glary convictions has come to town. Detectives could explore whether the inmate should be considered a suspect.

"It's critical for local police departments to know who's in our community and where," Chief Sampson said. He said state parole officers have let his office know of convicts living in his community before, and that such information, similar to what the jail will release, has been helpful in solving crimes.

"Knowing of it at a certain time allows us to get ahead of the investigation," the chief said.

Sheriff Glodis is calling the program

another way for his office and the county jail to be more pro-active in law enforcement.

Since last year, the sheriff has created a gang unit that helps local police identify known criminals, and helps investigate crimes.

The jail also has instituted other programs helping to monitor inmates, such as one that identifies inmates on the state's list of parents who don't pay child support. The ALERT program will be a daily function, helping police of communities throughout the county know of any inmate returning to their community.