



Holden PD using power of texts for anonymous tips

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Holden Police have added one more weapon to their crime fighting arsenal and they're putting it at your fingertips – literally.

Through a service called Webtips, residents can use their cell phones to anonymously text police to report information about any non-urgent illegal activity.

These may be information about unsolved cases, vandalism, theft or sale and distribution of drugs. Information about crimes being planned in schools or the community can also be anonymously reported.

Tipsters can text their information to 274637 and then type HPDTIPS. There is also a link on Holdenpd.com.

"This is by far the most innovative tool I have ever seen," Police Chief George R. Sherrill said.

Tipsters remain anonymous because their information is encrypted and routed through several secure servers that protect the informant's personal details.

The program also allows police to respond to the originating cell phone without ever knowing who left the identity of the person who left the tip. The user is always given an alias and a unique identity before being sent. This allows the tipster and the investigator to have a dialogue while always keeping the user completely anonymous.

"Many people are reluctant to call police for fear of retaliation," Detective Sergeant Chris Carey said. "With this, although we can text the person giving the tip, the system is totally anonymous. Unless people provide us with their names, there is no way to tell who they are."

The Webtips service will cost the town \$1,200 a year, Chief Sherrill said.

"It's been very effective for other police departments, so we decided to try it for a

year," he said. "If it's a success, we'll keep it."

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