



Friday, October 24, 2008

Pontiac

Police out to verify sex offenders' addresses

State, local authorities work together to update registry, locate criminals who are not in compliance.

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

PONTIAC -- Michigan State Police are teaming up with local police, including the Oakland County Sheriff's Office, in a statewide effort to update the addresses of all convicted sex offenders living in Michigan.

State police and the U.S. Marshals Service are conducting Operation Verify through the end of the month. Under state law, persons convicted of misdemeanor sex offenses must register once a year; felons must register four times a year. Noncompliance is punishable by jail sentences.

"We have 43,000 sex offenders in Michigan and at any given time there are up to 10,000 not in compliance with state law," said Sgt. Michele Hernandez of the MSP Sex Offender Registry section.

Hernandez could not say how many agencies conduct the checks and said many are hampered by manpower cutbacks.

"We can use all the help we can get -- from not just police agencies but the public," she said.

While some areas in outstate Michigan, such as Munising and St. Ignace, report 100 percent compliance, there are more than 1,100 unaccounted offenders -- also called absconders -- across Michigan.

Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said his deputies conduct quarterly checks of offenders living in 14 communities. There are 2,268 convicted sexual offenders registered in the county and 49 absconders being sought by deputies and state troopers, he said.

"It's scary how many of the sexual offenders repeat their crimes," said Bouchard, who wrote

the sexual offender legislation as a state senator in the mid-1990s. "Supposedly a pedophile has 100 victims during their so-called career. It's important to know where these people are once they are released from jail or prison."

Cooperative efforts with local police who regularly canvass offender addresses are important to avoid duplication of efforts by outside agencies.

Noncompliance is higher in communities that don't regularly track sex offenders, officials say.

Bouchard encourages parents whose children will be out trick-or-treating to review the state sexual offender registry Web site to find out where offenders live in their community so their children can avoid those locations.

People who suspect offenders are living out-of-compliance in their communities should contact their local police agency, call Michigan State Police at (517) 322-4939, or visit the state Web site at michigan.gov/msp.

You can reach Mike Martindale at (248) 647-7226 or mmartindale@detnews.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081024/METRO02/810240339>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.