

LAW and ORDER

Illinois State Police Internet Crimes Unit

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Anyone in the law enforcement field knows how difficult it can be to investigate these crimes, not to mention the additional resources and personnel needed. Illinois addressed this with the creation of a statewide Internet Crimes Unit, which is under the authority of the Illinois State Police.

This is one of the nation's largest state teams dedicated to Internet crime. The centralized Internet Crimes Unit (ICU) is presently composed of 10 officers, eight crime analysts and seven computer forensic investigators. It is expected that in a few years, other states will follow in these efforts.

<http://www.isp.state.il.us/icu>

The ICU is one of the four main components in Illinois' plan to fight Internet crime. The other goals include increasing the penalties of Internet crime, an area often overlooked. As technology changes, so does the need for updated, useable laws and sufficient penalties.

The third component is the ICU Web site, designed so it can be used by the public to get information about Internet crime and safety as well as an avenue to report suspicious online behavior. It is referred to as a "one-stop-shopping" location. The fourth component is a partnership between the ISP and NetSmartz and the placement of ISP officers in school classrooms across the state to teach the children how to be safe on the Internet.

The ICU will be a point of contact for both law enforcement and the general public. The unit will coordinate investigations with other law enforcement agencies helping to prevent conflicting investigative efforts. This is a large problem area for law enforcement that can certainly be addressed by an active ICU. Contrary to typical crimes where jurisdictions are usually clear, online investigations could have more than one ongoing investigation with each agency unaware of the other.

The ICU will not be reactive in nature but will actively search the Web for criminal activity. The unit will also perform the needed forensics to assist in the successful prosecution of Internet crimes, from identify theft, to fraud, to exploitation from sexual predators and everything in between. This area will also greatly assist law enforcement as relatively few Illinois agencies have in-house computer forensics personnel available.

The Internet Crimes Unit approaches Internet crime the same way the state approaches organized crime, narcotics and other major crimes. In addition to online filing, the site contains a variety of useful information for both Illinois residents and non-residents.

Features of the site include community awareness and education tools and Internet safety tips including tips and Web links on preventing identity theft. A section of the site provides links to help dispel myths, scams and legends. The site also contains the text of all the Illinois statutes that officers might need while investigating an Internet crime.

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