



Phony, outdated addresses found in sex offenders database

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DALLAS (AP) - One in six registered sex offenders in North Texas has false or outdated contact information in the state database that's charged with tracking them, according to a newspaper investigation.

Eighteen percent of 1,625 convicted sex offenders in North Texas provided the Texas Sex Offender Registry with addresses where they could not be found, The Dallas Morning News reported in its Sunday editions.

Those offenders either provided nonexistent addresses, are no longer living at the address where they're registered or never lived at the address.

A three-month investigation by the newspaper found that the registry contains numerous inaccurate addresses, allowing offenders to avoid attention.

Parents, schools, neighborhood associations and churches often rely on the state database to know more about the people who live in their communities. But Dallas Police Chief David Kunkle said those groups are using a registry with often flawed information.

"Not all sex offenders look the same as far as their willingness to comply with registration," said Kunkle. "The fact that you don't see anybody in your neighborhood on the registry shouldn't give you a false sense of security."

The state registry once included offenders who had committed four specific types of crimes. But it now includes offenders, including juveniles, who were convicted of nearly 20 types of crimes. The registry has grown from about 8,000 sex offenders in 1999 to about 45,000 in 2006.

Since 1995, local police departments have been responsible for maintaining the data and updating the state registry.

But some who monitor the registry say mistakes are inevitable when keeping track of so many people, especially when police departments are short on resources.

"When you have a choice between stopping drug crime and knocking on doors to check for sex offenders, it's not a hard choice," said **Timothy Bray**, a criminologist at the University of Texas at Dallas. "We mistakenly feel safe. But the opportunities for error are just rampant. We don't know where many of these people are."

Police say the job of tracking sex offenders is complicated by the fact that many ex-convicts move around a lot. Hundreds of sex offenders report address changes every month.

"It's a population that changes at the drop of a dime," said Dallas police Sgt. Irving Porter, who oversees the sex offender unit within the department.

Dallas, Denton, Tarrant, Rockwall and Collin Counties were included in the analysis by the Morning News.

The City of Dallas had 22 percent of sex offenders with incorrect addresses, the most of any city. In Fort Worth, 13 percent of sex offenders had incorrect addresses.

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