

NEW BRITAIN HERALD

New Britain, CT and surrounding areas

Rell announces updated sex offender registry

Wednesday, October 28, 2009 10:17 PM EDT

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Gov. M. Jodi Rell and state police unveiled upgrades to the state's Sex Offender Registry Wednesday that they say will help parents and officers keep better track of sex offenders.

The enhanced system was designed to bring the state up to new requirements outlined in the federal Adam Walsh Act and will allow people to actually track the listed addresses of the more than 5,000 people on the registry.

"The Connecticut sex offender registry was a national model when it was first rolled out — and now we are taking it to a new level," Rell said during a press conference announcing the enhancements Wednesday. "Our families must have every tool available to keep their children safe."

The improvements include a "mapping" feature that allows state residents to look up any convicted offenders living within a two-mile radius of their home. The site also features tips for parents on how to keep children safe and how to have appropriate discussions with their children about interaction with adults.

Individuals, groups or organizations can also sign up to receive e-mail "alerts" on convicted sex offenders who have moved into their area. The previous Web site allowed residents and police to look up offenders by name or city and provided only the offender's name, address and charges.

The new system will also provide a detailed description of the offense and the age of the victim for those who have been convicted after 2006 and will eventually allow law enforcement agencies and probation officers to trade information, said state police Lt. Samuel Izzarelli who works with the registry.

"It will allow law enforcement and probation to update the database to exchange or update information," Izzarelli said. "Now we'll be able to know the exact reason someone has gone into violation and why. The system will automatically print out reports that officers can verify. These upgrades should be done in the next 10 months."

The registry is maintained by the state police. Every convicted offender is required to register and verify that their address listed on the Web site is correct. Those who do not maintain their listed address are considered in violation.

The new system will also allow the state Department of Corrections to file electronic registrations for those offenders who will be leaving prison and coming back into the community.

The public will not have access to law enforcement information but will have better access to finding out if someone has come into their area, he said. But Izzarelli was careful to point out during Wednesday's press conference unveiling the changes that state police caution parents that the Web site is only one tool in keeping kids safe.

"The individuals on the Web site make up a small portion of the sex offenders in our communities," Izzarelli said. "Sexual assault is an under-reported crime and the statistics show about 3 percent of offenders have been convicted. The Web site should be used as one tool, not a clearing house for who should interact with children. It's a good place to start the education in a household on a topic that often isn't discussed."

Parents should regularly have sexual-safety discussions with their children and the talks should grow as their children grow, he said.

Residents can visit the updated registry at www.ct.gov/dps and click on the "sex offender registry" link on the left-hand tool bar.

How many are in your neighborhood?

A quick check of the registry reveals that there are 206 offenders in 164 locations in a two-mile radius of The New Britain Herald using the 1 Court Street, New Britain, address.

There are 59 offenders in 54 locations in a two-mile radius of the Bristol Press at 188 Main Street, Bristol, according to the registry.

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