



## Tracking System Could Stop Meth Production

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The Governor's Office for Drug Control Policy will once again ask for funding for an electronic tracking system to help stop meth production, meanwhile the Story County sheriff is launching the program to show it will work.

Sheriff Paul Fitzgerald is using grant money to electronically connect all pharmacies in Story, Boone and Greene counties in order to better track pseudoephedrine purchases.

Fitzgerald said pulling cold and allergy medications with pseudoephedrine off the shelves and putting it behind the pharmacy counter has already had a dramatic impact in Story County.

"The amount of meth labs literally went to zero," Fitzgerald said.

But officials said it didn't take long for those using pseudoephedrine to feed their addiction to find a way around the law. They'll go to one pharmacy and purchase the limit and then go to another pharmacy and do the same thing, a practice authorities call "smurfing."

"They'll either go in and do the smurfing or else they will have a number of friends that will go in and buy their limited amount to gather enough pseudoephedrine product to make the meth," Fitzgerald said.

To combat the problem, the Story County sheriff's office will launch a pilot program later this month to electronically track all pseudoephedrine purchases, countywide.

"Anyone that is purchasing over their limit at multiple places, that will be red flagged," Fitzgerald said.

Here's how it works: instead of filling out a log book a pharmacist will electronically enter your driver's license number and the product you plan to purchase into the computer. The information will all be stored in a database that law enforcement officials will access.

Pharmacist Steven Martens said the electronic system makes sense and will save time spent filling out the logbook.

"If you can't cut down at the level to where law enforcement has a good track on how things are going, you always wonder why are we putting this all on paper," pharmacist Steve Martens said. "It takes more time to do that and with that when you have people waiting for other prescriptions that's where it's been a real negative thing for us.

The Governor's Office for Drug Control Policy is asking the Legislature for \$230,000 to create a similar statewide electronic system.

Fitzgerald said he hopes that lawmakers will see the results of the Story County pilot project and understand the benefits to all of Iowa.

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