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### New system links county police

*Amy Yarbrough, STAFF WRITER*

As a narcotics detective 25 years ago in Redwood City, Jim Granucci often had to phone the more than 20 police agencies in the County to find out about a suspect's past. Sometimes, it took days. By the end of February, officers throughout the county could be able to get some of the same information in a matter of seconds, and with just a few clicks of a mouse.

Already in the test stages, new technology called Thinkstream will connect the county's police records systems, allowing agencies to share reports, accident information and, eventually, suspect photographs. It's just one of a number of new high-tech tools — from wireless connections for the Sheriff's Office to software that can link suspect sketches and mug shots — in the works for 2006.

County law enforcement was already connected through a computer network, but couldn't all share records because many of the agencies used different systems, said Hillsborough Police Chief Matt O'Connor. Thinkstream fixes that.

"It's a huge investigative tool," said O'Connor, who heads the county police chiefs and sheriff's association. "It would reduce hours and days of investigative work down to a handful of seconds."

Eight police agencies were selected to participate in a pilot project, others are now setting up their systems. All 23 county agencies should be connected in February, and the San Francisco Police Airport Bureau will join sometime in the first quarter of the year.

The project costs about \$330,000, most of which will be paid for with grants from the Department of Homeland Security and the state Office of Emergency Services, O'Connor said. The rest comes from local agencies.

The effort could grow. Local law enforcement officials are talking about linking up with police in San Francisco, Alameda, Contra Costa and Santa Clara counties, said Granucci, who is now director of the county's crime lab. The Palo Alto Police Department is expected to be online within 90 days.

Granucci said the system would enable officers to look up names, vehicle information, get driver's license photos and see whether a suspect has had contact with other agencies, possibly alerting them to a dangerous situation.

Since many police vehicles are now outfitted with laptop computers, the system could be used by officers on patrol.



*Photo: Director of the San Mateo County Forensic Laboratory Jim Granucci demonstrates the new Thinkstream data system that will help law enforcement to track suspects. The system collects and connects name, address, and police record data from all over the county.*

"If we had this technology 25 years ago as an investigator, this would have helped me significantly in solving crimes," Granucci said.

Also this year, the Sheriff's Office plans set up wireless hot spots that deputies can tap into via laptops in their vehicles, according to Undersheriff Greg Munks.

The agency also plans to put video cameras around high-crime areas or potential terrorist targets, such as San Francisco International Airport. Deputies could see these video images using the wireless computer system.

Such video camera technology is only now possible for the Sheriff's Office, because it has become more affordable, Munks said.

"We were a generation behind everyone," he said. "We cannot make big mistakes when it comes to technology."

Granucci said the Sheriff's Office is in the process of upgrading its mug-shot system, which will allow other agencies to look at them with the Thinkstream technology.

Soon, there will be software that will compare suspect sketches and mug shots by matching pixels and features, such as the distance between a suspect's eyes.

"The next year will be a real exciting one for county law enforcement," Granucci said. "We're not quite CSI yet, but we're getting close."

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