

From the Office of the Sheriff: “Victim Notification Program Launched”

Recently, the Sheriffs Department went live with WI-VINE, the Wisconsin Victim Information and Notification Everyday service. Wisconsin VINE is a free and anonymous telephone and online service that provides victims of crime and the general public with two important features: Information and Notification. This program is a service provided by the Sheriffs Department in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

WI-VINE is being implemented through a Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification grant. VINE will monitor the custody status of offenders in Wisconsin’s jails and make the information available to victims and the public either by phone or online. The information will be available 24 hours a day and 365 days a year.

How will the system work? VINE is an easy five step process. Step 1, victims will be educated about VINE from law enforcement, victim advocates as well as media releases and a robust public education campaign. Step 2 includes victims accessing VINE to lookup information via the telephone, internet or through the live VINE operators. Step 3, victims will register with VINE for telephone notifications, email notifications, and receive a private PIN code. Step 4, a notification event occurs such as the offender is released, is transferred or any other change in the offenders status. Step 5, notification of the event goes out to the victims, 24 hours a day with the victim confirming receipt with the PIN code.

How current will the information be? The VINE system will be updated by all county jails every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year. Anyone will be able to call VINE to determine the custody status of an offender. All you will need is a touch tone phone to use the service. Information will also be available at www.vinelink.com. To search for an offender, you will need either the offenders’ name or the offenders’ identification number. VINE will provide information on the offenders name, number, current offender custody status, offenders location, and scheduled release date (if available). What are some notification events which will trigger a notification to the victim? Should the offender be released, escape, die, or transfer, the victim will receive a VINE notification of that change in status.

The bottom line is WI-VINE will provide a very valuable service to victims of crime. Should you be assaulted and you register with VINE you will be notified when your offender is released, transferred or a return to custody should he had been released. VINE will provide peace of mind for victims; keeping them informed of where the offender is as well as provide that important information to the victim should the offender be released.

WI-VINE is a part of a national effort and currently offered in the majority of states and thousands of communities. Characterized as “a lifeline for victims of crime”, we are very pleased to now be in a position to offer this service. For more information, visit the website. Thanks for listening tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.