After further review . . .

Belton Police seek video replay help to catch criminals

BY SUSAN SHARP
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

BELTON — The Belton Police Department has begun a safety program that invites residents and businesses to help solve crimes.

Through the program, E-Watch, people can voluntarily submit surveillance videos, so police will have evidence they need to investigate alleged criminal activities.

"This program gives us another way to partner with the community," Sgt. Kim Hamilton said.

The program is voluntary, and the department will not be able to directly reach anyone's camera or other technology.

"I want people to be sure that they understand we don't have access to their systems," she said.

People who enroll in the program inform the department where the cameras are and the field of view the cameras capture.

Rusty Schramm/Telegram

The Belton Police Department's new E-Watch program will build a database listing private surveillance camera locations in the city that may provide video evidence to solve crimes.

Police can then get in touch with residents or business owners if officers believe cameras might have footage of a crime in progress, suspicious activity, suspect vehicles or the direction a criminal went when he or she entered or left the surveillance area. The camera owner can then supply the department with the footage.

Some people already have signed up for the program, and the department is building a database listing camera locations, Hamilton said.

According to citi-data.com, a website that lists crime statistics and rankings, the number of assaults, burglaries and thefts in Belton has increased during the past decade while the number of murders and auto thefts has remained stable, and the number of arsons has decreased.

Since the year 2000, Belton's crime rate has been lower than the U.S. average until about three years ago, when the city's crime rate rose to match the U.S. average. In comparison with nearby cities, Belton ranks low in crime rate compared to Killeen and has a crime rate comparable to Temple, Harker Heights, Bartlett and Troy. Salado and Holland have lower rates.

ssharp@tdtnews.com