

## 'Eye'-identifying those in need

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WEST BOYLSTON -- New eye-recognition technology obtained by the Worcester County Sheriff's Department Wednesday will allow officials to more quickly identify children who are missing, or seniors who suffer from Alzheimer's disease or dementia, Sheriff Guy Glodis said.

"When a deputy sheriff or a police officer finds them, they might not be able to communicate," Glodis said at the Worcester Jail and House of Correction Wednesday.

But in a matter of seconds, the \$25,000, suitcase-sized "iris biometric recognition technology" can scan the iris of a child or senior and return an exact match, as long the missing person had previously been entered into the nationwide database, according to Glodis.

More than 2,000 U.S. children are reported missing every day, and there are 47,000 active missing adult cases, Glodis said, citing U.S. Department of Justice statistics.

"We're really, really excited about having this technology, and it's really part of modernizing the Worcester County Sheriff's office," Glodis said.

Glodis had his own irises scanned Wednesday as part of a demonstration of the machine, which is sold by Plymouth-based BI2 Technologies.

After a few aborted attempts to get into the right position, the device photographed Glodis' eyes with a click and uploaded his information onto a laptop that sits next to the scanner.

The scan, along with a person's photo, physical details and emergency contact information, is uploaded to a national registry run by the Phoenix-based National Missing Children's Organization and Center for Missing Adults, a non-profit group.

The organization already has more than 100,000 names in its database, titled the Children's Identification and Location Database (CHILD) Project, according to a technician with BI2 Technologies.

"It's voluntary, so we are going to reach out to local councils on aging, local schools, and encourage participation," said Glodis' spokesman, Keith Mitchell.

The device is funded by the state and all of the state's sheriffs will have their own iris-scanning station shortly, Mitchell said.

The Massachusetts Sheriff's Association also gave a scanning station to the Molly Bish Institute for Child Health and Safety, a child welfare advocacy group.

The device is essentially a high-speed camera, BI2 Technologies spokesman Kevin O'Reilly said Wednesday.

"What it's actually taking a picture of is the iris, and the iris is more unique than fingerprinting," O'Reilly said in a

growing and tearing and it creates a unique set of patterns."

The technology has never been known to make a wrong match, O'Reilly said.

A child as young as 18 months can be successfully entered into the database, but officials said it can be difficult to get a child that young positioned correctly for the sensitive camera.

Entering children as young as five years old is more likely, especially at the public events at which the sheriff's office will be recruiting.

O'Reilly said a North Carolina sheriff is using the tool to help identify and track convicted sex offenders after their release.

The Hampshire County Sheriff's Department has been using the technology for more than a year now, and also uses it to correctly identify to-be-released prisoners.

Glodis said Wednesday he may examine expanding the program to include House of Correction inmates, and is investigating grants that would help pay for it.

"I have no doubt in the next several decades this is going to be the technology we are going to be using," Glodis said.

Glodis said recent high-profile incidents show the importance for public safety officials to quickly be able to discover children's true identities.

He noted that Shawn Hornbeck, a child who had been allegedly kidnapped for four years and was discovered in January, had been stopped on several occasions by police who did not know his true identity.

When police first discovered Utah resident Elizabeth Smart nine months after her abduction from her home, officers had trouble identifying her, Glodis said.

"When law enforcement came upon her, she was wearing a disguise and was basically lying about her identification," he said.



Worcester County Sheriff Guy Glodis sits near a computer that was able to identify him using iris recognition technology in West Boylston, Wednesday. (SENTINEL & ENTERPRISE / SARAH BRITAIN)