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Identifying People with a Simple Scan of Their Iris
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Andrew Adams, KSL Newsradio

Imagine police being able to identify a sex offender right on the street with a scan of his iris. It's already a reality, and it could be coming to Utah in future years.

Sheriff Jim Pendergraph says his deputies are already trying it out in Charlotte. Pendergraph says, "When the deputies confront them, they iris scan them, right on their front porch."

"Shift commanders will have this device with them. And as a call comes in, they can report it, and actually do the ID right in the field," says Sean Mullin, CEO of BI2 Technologies.

Weber County Sheriff Brad Slater likes it. He says, "That's down stream for us. That's a matter of program and funding."

Courtesy Andrew Adams, KSL Newsradio

The company says Salt Lake and Davis Counties are also interested.

Weber County already employs this technology to take snapshots of children; so if they disappear, their iris information may help in locating and identifying them.

Slater says next year the county also hopes to use the system when booking inmates at the county jail.

Courtesy Andrew Adams, KSL Newsradio

BI2 Technologies says the system costs just under $10,000 for a complete system. Additional field cameras cost about $5900. Executives say the company is moving to a PDA-based setup next year, which will bring the cost down. They say then, additional PDAs will be roughly in the $1400 to $1600 range.

Mullin says the technology is being employed right now in some form or another by law enforcement agencies in 27 states. It'll be up to 32 states by next year.

Other uses of the application include booking identification for inmates, identifying children as an abduction precaution, as well as identifying seniors that might be at risk to disappear; for example, seniors with Alzheimer's.

Company officials say the goal is to further establish a national iris database for sex offenders.

Police say it's a tremendous problem tracking sex offenders across the country who often seek to alter their appearance. They say iris registration and scanning helps the problem because of the capability to identify sex offenders on-site. They also say it's theoretically a much faster process than finger print identification.