

## Kodiak police now accepting tips via text message

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By SAM FRIEDMAN

Mirror Writer

**TO MAKE A TIP ONLINE, GOOGLE "KODIAK POLICE DEPARTMENT" AND CLICK ON THE TIP LINK.**

**TO MAKE A TIP VIA TEXT MESSAGE, TEXT "486TIP" AND THE TIP TO 274673 (CRIMES).**

The Kodiak Police Department has a new tool to encourage more citizens to report crimes.

After watching the number of tips decline to a trickle over the last few years, the police hope TipSoft, a service for sending tips via the Internet or text message, will revive participation

As recently as three or four years ago, Kodiak Crime Stoppers produced several hundred tips a year through its anonymous tip line, Kodiak City Police Chief T.C. Kamai said. Now the department gets about a dozen a year.

Anonymous tips have traditionally been especially valuable for drug enforcement, Kamai said.

"Far more happens in this town than we ever discover," he said "For whatever reason people don't always pass that information on. Perhaps they are related to someone or know them or just don't want to get involved."

TipSoft was launched without any publicity last week, and has already received a pair of tips.

Much like the existing telephone-based Crime Stoppers programs, the new system protects the identity of tipsters.

The third-party software scrubs identifying information about the computer or phone which sent it before passing the content of the message on to the police.

Anonymous tips are not used directly to pursue search warrants or arrests, but help the police decide where to begin investigating.

In his time in the Kodiak Police Department, Kamai said he does not know of a single case where Crime Stoppers violated the confidentiality of one of its tipsters.

But tipsters will still have the option of including their identity with a tip in order to be eligible for the program's cash rewards system.

The Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse program (IASA) is paying for the service through a U.S. Department of Justice grant. Enrollment in the service costs about \$1,200 with an annual fee of another \$1,200. IASA has made a three-year commitment to continue funding the program.

Local IASA program director Emily Arnick said she frequently hears people complain about not enough police drug enforcement at community drug forums.

She hopes TipSoft will encourage some of these people to let the police know.

Of particular importance is methamphetamine, or meth, a drug that has a reputation for being especially addictive and dangerous. Kamai said he has heard informal reports that it is on the rise in Kodiak, but without more information it is difficult to know.

IASA plans a meth forum Jan. 27 at the Koniag building. The group will also attend the Kodiak City Council meeting next Thursday to present a petition asking for more police funding for drug enforcement.

Mirror writer Sam Friedman can be reached via e-mail at [sfriedman@kodiakdailymirror.com](mailto:sfriedman@kodiakdailymirror.com).

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