

News

Police try to predict crime to prevent it

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RIO RANCHO, N.M. (KRQE) - It sounds like something out of a movie: technology that can predict crime so police can stop it before it happens.

<https://www.krqe.com/news/police-try-to-predict-crime-to-prevent-it/1019691857>

A local police department is using software to try to do just that.

"I hope it works because you don't feel safe in your home around here anymore," said Cecelia Matthews, a Rio Rancho resident.

It's property crimes at businesses in the evening, and around homes during the day, that Rio Rancho Police are trying to predict in hopes of preventing.

"This is kind of the first screen that comes up. It's just a map of the city," Rio Rancho Police Dept. Crime Analyst Richard Stanton said, displaying the computer software.

PredPol, short for predictive policing, gathers a history of crime data.

"This pulls data from five years back, way back. It adds new data all the time," Stanton said.

With knowledge of what has happened in the past, the software maps out key clues about crime that is likely in the future.

"The location, the time of day, the type of crime," said Deputy Chief Paul Rogers.

Each officer can check their beat during their shift and see, down to an intersection, what spot is most at risk and for what type of crime.

"The idea is to do community policing in an around that box," Stanton said.

It points officers to places where they can keep an eye out for anything suspicious or anything left out in the open that may be tempting to thieves.

"There's been a couple of occasions where officers within the box have observed crimes taking place and have made arrests," Rogers said.

Officers are mainly using PredPol in their time in between responding to calls.

If they're writing up a report, for example, they could do it in their car in one of the areas at risk and maybe their presence would be enough to scare off criminals.

He said the department began using the software in October.

They are hopeful it's helping, but say they will do a study to look for changes in crime statistics after using the program for six months and then after a year.

At the very least, for now, it seems to be comforting to the community.

"I think it's good for, you know, the community to know that the police department is active and trying to look into it before there are crimes," said Mary Romero, Rio Rancho resident.

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