



Newton police department using software to predict crime

By The Associated Press

Posted Dec 14, 2015 at 3:36 PM

NEWTON — A south-central Kansas police department is trying to utilize analytical software to help its officers patrol more effectively and lower the city's high crime rate.

The Wichita Eagle (<http://bit.ly/1YaggPp>) reports that the predictive policing software calculates where crimes are likely to happen after analyzing fed crime reports and other statistics.

But Newton Police Department Lt. Bryan Hall says it has been difficult for the department to use the fully potential of the technology because it is short-staffed, and most of the officers do not have time to do preventive police work.

Hall says only he has access to the program that runs predictions, but the department will likely give courses to its officers on how to use the software in January.

Newton Police Chief Eric Murphy said the department is fully staffed for what it is budgeted for, but that is not enough.

“We need people in excess of that to meet our staffing numbers and to be able to implement proactive policing,” Hall said. “Right now, we’re completely reactive. We have guys that respond to calls, take reports, go back to the station and write reports.”

The Wichita Police Department says it has been aware of the technology for the past five years, but other technologies, such as body cameras, that have been higher priorities for the department.

“Here’s kind of the concern with it: Are you getting what you’re paying for?” Wichita Police Department Capt. Doug Nolte said. “How accurate is it? Is it really predicting where crimes are going to be?”