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Multi-Agency Technology Upgrade Launched to Promote Safety

Access to license photos in an instant make officers, communities safer

The Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS), Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) announced today a multi-agency technology upgrade, the Georgia NISP Project (Nlets* Interstate Sharing of Photos), to securely and quickly release driver's license photographs to law enforcement. This effort will promote public safety by helping identify victims, criminal suspects, missing children and the elderly.

At present, law enforcement officers can electronically access information contained in a driving record maintained by DDS through the state's Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) network administered by the GBI. However, if an officer wanted to obtain a copy of a suspect's license or ID photo associated with the electronic driving record, the officer would need to submit a written request to DDS. This process can take up to two weeks to complete, making the request useless in many time sensitive cases.

The joint venture was championed by the DDS, GBI and GEMA. This new enhancement allows law enforcement entities to enter search criteria via a standardized Web browser for a driver's license record and to simultaneously query information from the DDS' stored digital driver's license photographs. Authorized users are granted secure, one-to-one and immediate access to information that previously could take days, or even weeks, to obtain.

"DDS is pleased to join GBI and GEMA in this cooperative effort. Providing a quality photograph along with driving histories will make situations safer for officers and the general public," said DDS Commissioner Gregory C. Dozier. "Digital images from driver records have significantly aided agencies charged with homeland security and emergency management," he added.

This inter-agency initiative will promote safe communities by providing enhanced tools for law enforcement to make expedient identifications that are more accurate. Law enforcement agencies, federal, state and local, use the driver license image on a frequent basis to identify victims, criminal suspects, missing children and the elderly (Kimberly's, Levi's and Mattie's Call – Georgia Alert Bulletins).

Protecting the security and integrity of a driver's personal information is and remains DDS' priority. A citizens' personal driving record, including photographs, are stored securely and can only be accessed as required by law or in the case of an active law enforcement investigation.

Project Facts

- Many individuals whose driver's license has been revoked or suspended do not have photo identification when they encounter law enforcement.
- Digital images captured on driver's licenses are reliable, of good quality and in most cases can provide the most recent image of a criminal suspect during an investigation.

- In the past, Georgia law enforcement did not have direct access to the photographs of Georgia residents who have been issued driver's licenses or ID cards. The process for law enforcement to request and receive a photo from DDS that was needed during an investigation was to submit a request via fax, email or letter. DDS would process approximately 2,000 photo requests per month.
- Beginning May 1, 2009, approximately 1,500 law enforcement users will have the capability to request and securely receive stored photographs via the GBI CJIS network. This capability will eventually be available to all law enforcement users. Photo retrieval by Georgia agencies will be dependent on the capabilities of the CJIS network terminal device and software operated locally by the law enforcement agency. In addition to vendor provided CJIS network software packages, GBI is making available the LEMS JX portal which does have image capability. The complete rollout of LEMS JX is expected by December 2010.
- This project was a collaborative effort between the DDS, GBI, GEMA supported by Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) along with grant funding support provided by Nlets.
- The project created a data-sharing application allowing law enforcement agencies, across jurisdictions, to request digital driver's license photographs stored on the DDS database.
- Law Enforcement involved in an active investigation will be able to have direct access to Georgia residents' driver's license photos from DDS database quickly to aid in criminal investigations, Amber Alerts, Kimberly's, Levi's and Mattie's Call (Georgia Alert Bulletins), etc.
- Law enforcement will be able to access driver's license photos remotely from laptops, etc.
- The request and retrieval of digital photographs will be via the established GBI GCIC CJIS Network. The ability to share drivers' license photos with other state systems will be provided through Nlets.
- The digital driver's license photographs will be used for identity purposes only.
- The electronic availability of driver's license photos will save valuable time and improves the productivity of officers in the field by eliminating unnecessary requests to retrieve printed driver's license photos from DDS personnel.
- Application development and hardware vendors were L-1 Identity Solutions, Inc. (NYSE: ID), and Unisys Corporation ((NYSE: UIS).

* Nlets (The International Justice & Public Safety Network, formerly known as National Law Enforcement Telecommunication System). Nlets provides two basic capabilities to its users. First, it is an international, computer-based message switching system that links together state, local, and federal law enforcement and justice agencies for the purpose of information exchange. Second, it provides information services support for a growing number of justice related applications. To accomplish this, Nlets supports data communications links to state networks using a commercial frame relay service. All agencies within each state are serviced through this state interface. Federal and international systems operate in much the same manner. The primary Nlets operational site is located in Phoenix, Arizona, with a disaster recovery site located with the Idaho State Police that is capable of providing full continuity of operations in less than thirty minutes. The user population is composed of all of the states/territories, all Federal agencies with a justice component, selected international agencies, and strategic partners, all cooperatively exchanging data. The types of data being exchanged vary from motor vehicle and driver's data, Canadian 'Hot File' records, and INS databases to state criminal history records. Nearly 90 million messages are transacted each month.

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