JUSTNET:

Safe Harbor in an Internet Sea

By Rick Neimiller

The good news is that through the use of the Internet, information on any conceivable topic is just a few mouse clicks away. The bad news is that in a virtual tidal wave of available information, a Web surfer can easily go off course in an ocean of Web sites, a number of which are dead ends or full of misleading or incorrect information. But for the individual looking for corrections-related product and technology information, JUSTNET, at www.nlectc.org, can offer a safe harbor in a storm of information overload.

JUSTNET, the official Web site of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) system, provides access to technology information of importance to all local, state and federal corrections personnel, as well as to those involved in law enforcement and the forensic sciences. According to Donna Engler, JUSTNET coordinator, the Web site presents several different avenues through which to learn about new and upcoming technologies, equipment guidelines and standards, objective testing data, and science and engineering advice to support and implement technologies. All of this is provided at no charge to the end user.

"JUSTNET is one of our best ways to get out information on projects and research being sponsored by the Office of Science and Technology and the NLECTC system," Engler says. "This no-cost service serves as the place where people can learn all about the NLECTC system and how each of its centers and offices work together to assist corrections, law enforcement and forensics, and to be that 'honest broker,' which is so needed by all sectors of the public safety community. For the correctional officer, supervisor or administrator, JUSTNET features a number of information resources and services that make it an indispensable tool."

JUSTNET's features include:

- *Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology News Summary Reports:* One of the latest additions to JUSTNET, these weekly postings provide synopses of corrections- and law enforcement technology-related articles that have been published in professional publications, trade journals, and commercial newspapers and magazines. These summaries also are available weekly through an electronic e-mail list, *JUSTNETNews*. These technology news summaries are an efficient way of staying current without having to wade through entire articles or subscribing to a large number of publications.
- *Products Database.* This easily accessible database allows manufacturers and vendors to post information about their products and services along with point-of-contact information and product photos/graphics. Currently, the database, which can be searched by keyword, category or manufacturer, contains information on more than 1,500 products and services.
- *Police Body Armor Database.* Updated on an almost daily basis, the Police Body Armor Database provides a comprehensive listing, by manufacturer and threat level, of models of body armor found to comply with National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Standard 0101.03 Ballistic Resistance of Police Body Armor. NIJ is developing a standard for stab- and puncture-resistant body armor. Once this standard is completed and the testing program initiated, models found to comply with this standard will be similarly posted.
- *Publications* All publications produced through the NLECTC system are posted on JUSTNET. These publications, which include equipment performance/testing reports; the NLECTC quarterly newsletter, *TechBeat*; and product information bulletins (such as a recent one on electronic monitoring), can be viewed on-screen and printed out as either ASCII text files or as Adobe® Acrobat® (.pdf) files. Hard copies of most posted documents also may be ob-tained at no cost by calling NLECTC at 1-800-248-2742.
- *Topic Boards:* JUSTNET provides the opportunity to post specific questions and concerns relating to corrections and law enforcement technologies and products. The Web site offers two levels of topic boards. One is a public board, which can be accessed by anyone logging onto JUSTNET. The other is a restricted (password-protected) board, accessible only to those in the corrections field. Both boards are monitored by NLECTC staff, who offer assistance and guidance.
- *Specific Corrections-Related Information and Events:* As an ongoing service, information on specific corrections-related topics, such as the development of standards for puncture-resistant gloves and vests, is posted on JUSTNET. Of special note is information posted

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on the 1033 (Excess Property) Program, which transfers excess and surplus military equipment to correctional teams, squads or individuals who enforce the laws within a prison jurisdiction. Information on events such as the annual Mock Prison Riot at the old Moundsville, W.V., state penitentiary and the annual NIJ Technology Institute for Corrections also is posted and updated regularly.

- *Links:* JUSTNET offers an array of more than 800 links to other correctional and criminal justice sites, such as the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Bureau of Corrections Statistics and the American Correctional Association. Reviewed and organized by an NLECTC staff member, these links also may be downloaded from JUSTNET and imported into either Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape browsers.

"Web sites such as ours are one of the best resources for cost-free, advertiser-free, authoritative information from the federal government," Engler says. "JUSTNET continues to expand every day and I would encourage all corrections personnel to explore the site and let us know how we can better serve your needs."

Because the primary focus of NLECTC at its inception was law enforcement-related, JUSTNET, when it began in 1995, was principally a resource for police officers and departments. But as the NLECTC system grew and expanded its correctional component, so too did JUSTNET. In the spring of 1998, JUSTNET also underwent a massive redesign, which doubled the number of resources on the site and made it more user-friendly. For assistance or more information, contact the NLECTC Hotline at 1-800-248-2742.

Rick Neimiller is communications coordinator for the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center in Rockville, Md

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