

NLECTC: Here to Serve

Criminal justice professionals are increasingly reliant on technology and need sound advice and information to do their jobs. To meet that need, the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) system has reorganized its resources to better serve the public safety community and foster communication and information sharing.

Members of law enforcement and staff from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), NLECTC and legislative offices attended a ceremony and open house in April to mark the restructuring of the regional component of the system, a new phase in NLECTC's 16-year evolution.

Acting NIJ Director Kristina Rose recognized NLECTC as integral to NIJ's mission to provide the knowledge, tools and research necessary to improve criminal justice policy and practice in the United States, with a special emphasis on state, local and tribal criminal justice agencies.

"The NLECTC system is critical to our science and technology program," Rose said. "It assists NIJ in identifying the technology needs of the practitioner community and in testing and evaluating potential solutions to those needs. The NLECTC system administers NIJ's compliance testing program to ensure that vital criminal justice equipment, such as body armor, is both safe and effective. In addition, the NLECTC system serves as a clearinghouse to provide the latest information to our brethren in the field."

NLECTC began in 1994 and evolved into a system of regional and specialty centers across the country. Rose noted that when centers provided assistance to their regions, they sometimes duplicated the roles and functions of other centers. Under the revised structure, the system includes a national center, several Centers of Excellence (CoEs) and three outreach centers serving different demographic areas of the public safety community.

The outreach centers will serve as the point of entry to the resources of the NLECTC system and direct criminal justice agencies to the technology assistance

resources they need, ensuring they have unbiased access to a full range of relevant scientific and technology-related information.

The States, Major Cities and Counties Regional Center concentrates on larger criminal justice agencies (those having 50 or more sworn personnel). The Small, Rural, Tribal and Border Regional Center focuses on the unique law enforcement challenges faced by those types of agencies. The Alaska Regional Center serves criminal justice agencies in that state, drawing on the resources of the entire NLECTC system.

The CoEs support NIJ's research, development, testing and evaluation efforts in communications technologies, electronic crime technology, forensic science, information and sensor systems and weapons and protective systems.

"If you carefully trace the efforts of the NLECTC system, you can see the clear efforts over time to make the system the premier go-to tech assistance and support center that it is today," Rose said.

Capt. Mitch Cunningham of the Montgomery County Police in Maryland attended the ceremony and is familiar with the contributions of NIJ and NLECTC.

"The critical thing that NIJ has provided is recognition that the vast majority of law enforcement is handled by state and local agencies," Cunningham said. "It has had a significant impact on raising the standards and improving safety equipment, education and technical support."

"One of the things NIJ has done is emphasize the role of technology in law enforcement meeting its goals of crime reduction," he said. "I'm of a generation of law enforcement that doesn't really have a technical background, and NIJ recognizing that and emphasizing the importance of technology helped police officers at every level in agencies recognize the importance of it and overcome their fears about the complexity of it. By highlighting the achievements of real crime reduction results, NIJ has excited police chiefs who may be intimidated by technology to really invest in technology and understand

it and implement it. That just was not going on before NIJ and NLECTC.”

Col. George F. Johnson, Superintendent, Maryland Natural Resources Police, and president of the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association, was not aware of what NLECTC offers before he attended the ceremony.

“I plan to go back to the chiefs throughout Maryland and encourage them to look at the NLECTC website and see how it can help their respective agencies,” Johnson said.

The open house included a display of a mobile interactive firearms simulator housed at the rural center and a powered parachute that can be used for aerial surveillance.

Also attending the ceremony were NIJ NLECTC program staff, the Rockville mayor, and staff representing the offices of U.S. Reps. Hal Rogers of Kentucky, where the rural center is located, and Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, whose district includes Rockville, home of the states and major cities center.

For information on the NLECTC system, visit <http://www.justnet.org>, call (800) 248-2742 or e-mail asknlectc@nlectc.org, or contact the federal program manager, Michael O’Shea, at michael.oshea@usdoj.gov.

**The National Law Enforcement and
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2010 JOINT LAW ENFORCEMENT TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has extended the visibility of its technology institutes. In March 2010, NIJ and the U.K. Home Office Scientific Development Branch jointly hosted a law enforcement technology institute in England. Law enforcement practitioners from the United States and the U.K. were invited to attend to discuss technology initiatives and issues with representatives of NIJ and NLECTC, providing participants with different perspectives on how to solve similar technology problems and fostering professional collaboration and networking relationships. Discussion topics included technology implementation in rural and urban law enforcement environments, U.S. body armor efforts, license plate recognition systems and border security.



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