

# **BUCYRUS TELEGRAPH FORUM**

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## **OFFICIALS EYE WAY TO WATCH LAWBREAKERS**

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Tetherlink of Mansfield electronic specialist Ben Starbuck, left, shows some house arrest electronic equipment to Municipal Court Judge James Hoover.

To a person walking into the Crawford County Common Pleas Courtroom, it might have looked like court officials were thinking about buying a new wrist watch.

Actually they were looking at what one electronics expert calls "the Richland County Rolex" -- electronic home monitoring equipment for keeping citizens under house arrest.

Gene Pitzer, president of Tetherlink [[www.tetherlink.com](http://www.tetherlink.com)] of Mansfield, an offender monitoring and electronic detention system firm; and Ben Starbuck, electronic specialist with Tetherlink, showed the latest gadgetry in house arrest equipment options.

Common Pleas Court Judge Russ Wiseman has said he is interested in equipment that would give some offenders an alternative to incarceration.

With the loss of three intensive probation officers, the judge is looking for ways to increase monitoring of people on parole or probation.

Three deputies had to leave their part time jobs as probation officers because of a law requiring they be paid overtime for any time on the weekly county clock over the 40 hours they work as fulltime peace officers.

State parole officers with the court will assume the workload.

Crawford County Bailiff Lee Miller said most of the electronic equipment the county has had before was to verify curfew violations.

The WT 1234 Wrist Transmitter Starbuck showed court officials looks like a watch. It sends out a signal probation officers can monitor. Options include a violation being registered on a personal computer or pager.

The band is tamperproof and will register a "tampering violation" if it is stretched or removed.

Starbuck said it is called the "Richland Rolex" since so many adult probation clients in Richland County wear them. His firm handles monitoring.

He also demonstrated the HM-100 Hand held Monitor which enables an officer to remotely detect the present of a wrist transmitter worn by an offender. It registers the offender's identification number and name.

Officers use the monitors to scan bars and other gathering spots probationers might go to in violation of their probation orders.

Pitzer displayed the House Arrest Box, which can track several parolees or probationers at a time, such as residents of a halfway house.

The CTC-890 Base Unit, which hooks into a telephone line and resembles a small police scanner, is what Pitzer called "the most effective method of monitoring the compliance of an offender charged with domestic violence who is prohibited from approaching a victim."

The box is given to the victim and can pick up the presence of an offender from several hundred feet away. An alarm goes off and an electronic voice calls 9-1-1 and identifies the violator and where he and the victim are.

The machine also enables the dispatcher or officer to talk with each other. The victim can also obtain a red flashing light and siren to mark the residence for police.

Starbuck said various other products are available, including a small belt worn or hand-held transmitter that can trip the home monitor and has a panic button that can alert police.

The transmitter vibrates when a wrist band monitor is near.

Starbuck said the base unit and transmitter are used mostly in domestic violence cases where the defendant has been issued a restraining order.

"The transmitter allows someone to know if they are being stalked when they're outside," Pitzer said.

Miller said the county monitors the systems.

Crawford County Municipal Court Judge James Hoover said the court will consider several home monitoring options.

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