



Gang Members Reject Those Tracked With GPS

Ankle Bracelets Change Gang Members' Behavior, Police Say

By Caroline Moses

New technology used to track gang members is causing some unforeseen side effects: GPS ankle bracelets are actually changing the behavior of more than just those who wear them.

The head of Metro's gang unit said gang members are rejecting fellow gang members who wear the GPS bracelets. Law enforcement didn't know that would happen, but said it's helping.

"The level of graffiti and activity seems like it has decreased over the last several months," said Sam McCullough, who helps run the Cleveland Park Neighborhood Association in East Nashville.

He said he would wake up to an entire street covered in gang graffiti just a few years ago, but that's recently been gone. McCullough said he thinks it might be because Metro's gang unit is now using GPS ankle bracelets to better track gang members' every move.

"If it's working, continue it," said McCullough.

"It's reduced the potential for these folks to become involved in any other crime because now they know they're monitored," said Metro Gang Unit Lt. Gordon Howey.

The tracking program started with 10 gang members. One of them completed the terms of his

parole and is off the monitoring. Two others recently violated terms of their probation and parole and are back in jail. A parole location violation, such as curfew, can now be tracked by the bracelets.

"These folks are walking around with a target on them, to some degree," said Howey.

Howey said gang members are rejecting those who have the bracelets because they don't want to be tracked also.

"It keeps them from getting together with the gang to plot and plan further criminal activity. And then, too, it keeps that individual confined to the places where they're supposed to be," said Howey.

And if gang members do allow someone wearing a bracelet to be with them, Metro's gang unit now has exact information on their every location, so future gang activity in specific neighborhoods, such as Cleveland Park, can be stopped.

"The more detailed info you get, the better off we all are," said McCullough.

Police said if the GPS tracking program continues to pay off, they may push to expand it beyond the 10 gang members. But for now, they'll keep it small to best observe each person's locations.

