



## Commissioners approve ankle monitors to help relieve jail overcrowding

by Jessica Savage

**CORPUS CHRISTI** — Judges now will have the option to place inmates on house arrest to alleviate crowding at the Nueces County Jail.

County commissioners approved a program Wednesday that provides ankle-monitoring bracelets for certain offenders rather than sending them to jail.

Offenders would be required to pay the \$6.50-a-day cost of the electronic tracking devices, which will be leased by the county.

“This is a great move with the ankle monitors, but it’s a Band-Aid fix for the overcrowding problems,” said Sheriff Jim Kaelin, who would like to see the 1,020-bed facility expanded to ease crowding.

The jail reached capacity last month, forcing the county to transfer inmates to other nearby facilities.

It was the first time since 1992 the jail had more inmates than it could hold. The jail population Wednesday was at 944 inmates, or 93 percent capacity.

Inmates eligible for ankle monitors will be low-risk offenders, such as offenders who are released during the day to go to work but must return to jail for the night, Kaelin said. Local judges will decide which offenders

qualify, and the monitoring and fee collections will be handled by the sheriff’s office.

GPS can track offenders wearing the device within 100 feet of their locations, Kaelin said. If they violate the geographic bounds of the ankle monitor, they face arrest and further punishment.

It’s unclear when the program will begin, and the department is developing a policy for the program, Kaelin said. The county is expected to order 10 ankle monitors and evaluate the program after two months to determine whether it is effective.

Kaelin said if the program proves successful it could lower jail costs over time, but there would be no immediate cost benefit. The devices, however, do lower the county’s liability costs of housing inmates in jail, he said. Liability costs include inmate injuries and/or lawsuits filed against the county related to the jail.

Under the monitoring program, the county would be liable up to \$500 for any damages or repairs needed to the ankle devices.

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