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Free database helps police track any stolen items

BY MITCH MITCHELL

STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

A Web site that reunites stolen art with its legal owners is making its service available to Texas residents for free and expanding that service to cover more than art.

Texans can go to www.trace.com and anonymously create a database of their valuables. If those things are stolen, police can use that information to identify stolen items and return them to their rightful owners. The Web site will accept pictures, receipts, serial numbers and merchandise descriptions.

Those who sign up for the service can search the database to help locate their stolen valuables. Potential buyers can also search the database so they don't buy stolen merchandise.

"Trace is designed to help you get your stuff back and to protect consumers who might be sold stolen property," said Ken Bouche, Trace vice president.

The Texas project is Trace's first law enforcement partnership in the country. Texas was chosen because of the work of the Texas Police Chief's Association and the large number of property crimes in the state, Bouche said.

The Texas Department of Public Safety and more than 500 local Texas police departments and sheriff's offices will make stolen-property files available to the public through the Trace Web site.

Trace works with more than half the police forces in the United Kingdom and a number of international law enforcement organizations, Bouche said.

According to its records, Trace has the world's largest database of stolen art, estimated at 500,000 items, and it is posting more than 190,000 items that Texas police and sheriff's departments have reported stolen to the FBI.

"There were nearly 1 million property crimes in Texas last year," Bouche said. "Trace.com was created to reclaim stolen property ... as well as to prevent future criminal activity."

Trace.com was created to reclaim stolen property.

Trace searches

The Trace online database includes all identifiable property reported stolen to the FBI by hundreds of Texas police agencies. Texans can access the Trace database, www.trace.com, for free to:

Research items before purchasing them to determine whether they are stolen.

Report recently stolen property to law enforcement.

Create a secure, anonymous inventory of their property that could aid in recovering the property if it is stolen.

Trace officials recommend posting pictures of your valuables and recording serial numbers or owner identifiable markings to aid in recovery.

Source: Trace

mitchmitchell@star-telegram.com

MITCH MITCHELL, 817-548-5411

Police try to ease access

to stolen property files

Texans have a new way to combat thieves through a high-tech tool. The Texas Police Chiefs Association is working with Trace.com to offer a free service through which people can anonymously register an inventory of their valuable property, report stolen property or check on whether an item they want to buy has been reported stolen, officials said. The Texas Department of Public Safety and more than 500 local Texas police departments and sheriff's offices are taking part in the effort to make Texas stolen property files available to the public at www.trace.com.


Tanya Eiserer

Posted on Tue, Nov. 20, 2007

Web site allows public to see if property was stolen

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Related Content

- <http://www.trace.com> 

AUSTIN -- Just in time for the holidays, a new Web site allows people to register valuable property and check whether items they are buying have been reported stolen.

Trace.com, a subsidiary of MyThings Inc., is collaborating with the Texas Police Chiefs Association, Texas Department of Public Safety and more than 500 local police departments and sheriff's offices in the state.

The Web site will let people register property, report property that has been stolen and check whether an item is reported stolen.

The company already has partnered with more than half the police forces in the United Kingdom and some international law enforcement organizations. Trace's Texas project is its first law enforcement partnership in the United States, according to a statement issued by the police chiefs association.

"Having a single database of stolen items that all Texans - from recent crime victims, to eBay customers, to antique dealers and pawnbrokers - can access will help us identify and return stolen property," said Abilene Police Chief Melvin Martin, president of the police chiefs association.