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Mentor police using smartphone for reporting crime, suspicious activity

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Smartphone users now have a new way to report crimes or suspicious activity to the Mentor Police Department by way of the iWatchNEOhio app. Available for Android, Blackberry and Apple devices, the app allows users to report crimes or suspicious activity to police and gives them plenty of options, including submitting text or voice messages and sending in pictures or video. Users also can label their tip with 21 different crime categories, including animal abuse, arson, DUI, robbery or vandalism. Capt. Ken Gunsch, the operations commander for Mentor police, said tips can remain anonymous and no tip is too small. "Any little bit can help," Gunsch said. When a tip is submitted, it is sent to the Northeast Ohio Regional Fusion Center, which monitors submissions at all times from the various participating police agencies. If the incident is an urgent manner, the fusion center will call the department directly, he said. "Some people nowadays just prefer to send a text instead of calling on the phone. That's just the way the world is," Gunsch said. "It just is another way to build a relationship with the community." In addition to submitting information, the app also allows users to track the status of tips they have submitted and sign up for mobile crime, traffic and weather alerts. While the app, which Mentor officially began using on May 14, has not yet led to any solved crimes, it has resulted in a few quality of life responses that were handled by other city or government agencies. An investigation is ongoing based on a narcotics tip sent through the app, the captain said. Gunsch was quick to note that the app does not replace 911 service. If an incident is a crime in progress or an urgent emergency, he suggested residents still call 911 for the quickest response. The app can be downloaded by visiting

www.iwatchneohio.com

Special Offer: Only 99¢ for the first 3 months or by searching "iWatchNEOhio" in the Google Play store or Apple's App Store.

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