

# The Pueblo Chieftain

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## Police computers go from 'chisel and stone to paper and pencil'



Jim Billings



Dayton Robinson

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### ***Pueblo Police Department switches to new computer system.***

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By NICK BONHAM  
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Bye-bye stone age. Hello technology.

Report-writing and crime-fighting are expected to be easier and more efficient under a new computer program implemented a week ago at the Pueblo Police Department.

"It'll be head and shoulders above what we're used to working with," Chief Jim Billings said Tuesday.

"This is like going from chisel and stone to paper and pencil," added Capt. Dayton Robinson of computer services.

The roughly \$800,000, Windows-based Open Software Solutions, Inc. replaces the department's old IBM-based HTE program, implemented almost 10 years ago. With the system's new features, Billings said officers can finish reports faster; response time to calls will be quicker because dispatchers can

geographically track officers' whereabouts and send them on closer calls; and allow patrol officers to perform a variety of crime-analysis searches on the laptops of their police cruisers.

Of course, with all things new comes some problems.

Robinson said the problems they've encountered deal with coding of crimes and cases of operator error.

Some officers have called the transition frustrating, but the majority of the force welcomes the new system.

"We're not in a panic mode," Billings said. "People are going to have frustrations .Ê.Ê. That's an individual thing, not a system thing."

He added: "It's like sending 255 people home and telling them to program their VCR. Some will have no problem with it and others are going to struggle."

OSSI will also give citizens an opportunity to file their own electronic police report. That is still in the making, however. Robinson said he hopes the citizen-reporting module will be ready on the department's Web site in a month or so.

"It could be graffiti or someone's garden hose got stolen or vandalism of a mailbox," Billings said. "It's for minor crimes where there's no suspect information or officers don't have to be on-scene. Citizens can report the incident at their convenience. And through that we can free up more officers to respond on more-serious crimes." Also with the program came license/identification card readers. Like swiping a debit card at the supermarket, with the flick of a wrist officers can run a suspect's ID and quickly view on their computer screen if the suspect has outstanding warrants and view their criminal history. This used to be the responsibility of dispatchers.

No more hand-written tickets, either, according to Billings. With the card readers came printers.

If someone is stopped for speeding they'll receive a clear and official copy of their ticket, completed by a swipe of their license and a couple key strokes.

Some officers have said their card readers and printers did not work. Robinson said he had not received reports of faulty hardware.

There was no gradual transition from the old to the new.

Rather than introduce OSSI to a small group of officers in each department and patrol unit, Billings

said the change had to come all at once.

"All the data had to be in one system," he said.

"And then it becomes harder because you're working in two different systems, and it would've cost us more money," added Robinson.

The police department started looking at using the OSSI program in June 2007. Officers started training to use the system three months ago, and possibly forgot some of their training since then, which can explain officers' frustrations, Billings said.

Both Billings and Robinson said that the probability of losing police reports and records in the process is "impossible."