



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

## U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

### News Releases

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### **New program to enhance identification and removal of criminal aliens in New Hanover, Duplin, and Orange counties**

#### ***Now criminal and immigration records of all detainees to be checked***

CHARLOTTE, N.C.-New Hanover, Duplin and Orange counties have been added to a growing list of North Carolina counties participating in a program developed by the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Homeland Security (DHS) that bolsters the ability to identify and remove dangerous deportable criminal aliens in local custody.

Known as Secure Communities, the program administered by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), provides ICE and participating local agencies immigration history information available for all individuals booked into the jail.

Formerly as part of that booking process, arrestees' fingerprints were taken and checked for criminal history information against the DOJ biometric system maintained by the FBI. With the implementation of Secure Communities, the fingerprints of arrested individuals will now be simultaneously checked against both the FBI's criminal history records and the biometrics-based immigration records maintained by DHS.

If an individual's fingerprints match those of a person in the DHS fingerprint system, the new automated process will notify ICE and the participating agency submitting the fingerprints. ICE will evaluate each case to determine the individual's immigration status and take appropriate enforcement action. Top priority will be given to offenders who pose a threat to the public safety, such as aliens with prior convictions for major drug offenses, murder, rape, robbery, and kidnapping.

"Secure Communities is a new effort to identify and ultimately remove dangerous criminal aliens from our communities," said Executive Director for ICE Secure Communities David Venturella. "Our goal with this ICE program is to use technology to prevent criminal aliens from being released back into the community, with little or no additional burden on our local law enforcement partners."

Duplin County Sheriff Blake Wallace said, "We are excited about having the technology to access the Department of Homeland Security's and the Department of Justice's information. I believe that, by

working with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the Secure Communities program, we can identify and remove dangerous criminal aliens from Duplin County. This is another tool in our arsenal to make Duplin County an even safer place to live, work and raise a family."

"The New Hanover County Sheriff's Office is excited to be among the first participants in the implementation of ICE's Secure Communities Program," said New Hanover County Sheriff Sid Causey. "With the information obtained from this program we will be able to make New Hanover County safer by identifying and removing criminal aliens from our midst. The wealth of information to which we will have access is unprecedented and gives us the upper hand in our ongoing battle against the criminal element."

Secure Communities enhances the ongoing joint efforts by ICE and the sheriff's departments in New Hanover and Duplin counties to identify criminal aliens in the counties' jail systems and process them for deportation. Wake, Buncombe, Henderson and Gaston counties began participating in Secure Communities at the end of last year and more North Carolina counties are expected to participate in the near future. Eventually, in collaboration with DOJ and other DHS components, ICE plans to expand this capability to all state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the nation.

Secure Communities is the cornerstone of DHS's comprehensive plan to distribute technology that links local law enforcement agencies to both FBI and DHS biometric systems. DHS's US VISIT Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT) holds biometrics-based immigration records, while the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) contains biometric-based criminal records.

"US VISIT is proud to support the Secure Communities program, helping provide decision makers with comprehensive, reliable information when and where they need it," said US VISIT Director Robert Mocny. "By enhancing the interoperability of DHS's and the FBI's biometric systems, we are able to give federal, state and local decision makers information that helps them better protect our communities and our nation."

"Under this plan, ICE will be utilizing FBI system enhancements that allow improved information sharing at the state and local law enforcement level based on positive identification of incarcerated criminal aliens. Additionally, ICE and the FBI are working together to take advantage of the strong relationships already forged between the FBI and state and local law enforcement necessary to assist ICE in achieving their goals," said FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Assistant Director Tom Bush.

Secure Communities is a key facet of ICE's enforcement priority to identify, locate and deport criminal aliens and builds on the growing success of the agency's Criminal Alien Program. In fiscal year 2008, ICE identified more than 221,000 potentially deportable aliens incarcerated nationwide. This fiscal year, the agency anticipates spending more than \$1 billion on such efforts, which in addition to Secure Communities, also includes expansion of the agency's Criminal Alien Program and Fugitive Operations Program.

More information about ICE's Secure Communities program is available at [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov).

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department

of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

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