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— Detective Austin Francescone,  
Franklin County, Ohio, Sheriff's Office



A **GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY** Solution Spotlight: **BIO-key/The BlackBerry Solution/Sprint**

## Mobile Officers Armed With More Data

*Sprint PocketCop application on BlackBerry smartphones gives officers mobile access to law enforcement databases.*

Law enforcement officers have a tough job to do. The more help we can give them, the better. For any officer, access to criminal and motor vehicle databases for flagging outstanding arrest warrants or stolen vehicle reports, for example, is an important tool. That kind of data can now accompany officers anywhere, even when they're not in a patrol car.

Mobile officers — whether on foot, on a motorcycle or undercover — can now look up license plates, photos, driver's license info and other data, all from smartphones they carry with them. Prior to this, if officers needed such information, they'd either have to be in a patrol car with a laptop or they'd have to radio in to dispatch. Now they can access the info they need themselves, much more quickly.

Sprint, the BlackBerry® solution and BIO-key® International are giving officers in Franklin County, Ohio, more mobile information than they've ever had before. BIO-key designed the Sprint PocketCop®

mobile application to work with BlackBerry smartphones, giving officers more data on the go.

Detective Austin Francescone has been with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office for 10 years. The undercover officer was immediately impressed with the combined solution of Sprint, PocketCop and the BlackBerry solution. “Law enforcement has to embrace technology and use it to our advantage,” he said. “PocketCop on the BlackBerry smartphone is small, portable, and it helps me be more effective in the field.”

While the Sprint wireless network provides reliable service, the lightweight, multifunctional BlackBerry smartphones give officers all-in-one capability they didn't have before. The BlackBerry smartphones eliminate the need to carry several devices, such as cell phones, pagers, PDAs and laptops. The new system gives officers secure, over-the-air access to law enforcement and motor vehicle databases.

## More Data Instantly

The Franklin County Sheriff's Office serves a population of 1.7 million people from the county seat in Columbus. The Sheriff's Office was chosen as the lead agency in the deployment.

With a grant from the Department of Homeland Security, the deployment's goal was to find the best way to ensure law enforcement officers have wireless access to police databases, such as the Ohio Law Enforcement Automated Data System and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).



In addition to Franklin County Sheriff's officers and investigators, the system now serves users in the FBI's Columbus office, the Metropolitan Parks Division, and Ohio State University, as well as the Columbus Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies. Today, 30 PocketCop-enabled BlackBerry smartphones are in use by patrol deputies, undercover detectives, FBI agents, and parks and university security teams.

The small size and extended battery life of the BlackBerry smartphone are just two of many benefits. The solution also lightens the load on radio systems and dispatchers, and

the BlackBerry smartphones are intuitive and easy to use. Access to more information in the field is invaluable, making the solution an extremely cost-effective aid to law enforcement agencies.

"I can do anything from my BlackBerry smartphone that an officer can do in a police cruiser," said Francescone. "I can see what officers are on duty, send them messages, run license plates and stolen vehicles, and determine whether individuals are dangerous."

## An Everyday Aid

Officers like the fact that they can quickly check information themselves. For example, Francescone finds it useful when executing search warrants, which often involve numerous agencies. "I use my BlackBerry smartphone and PocketCop to pull up the auditor's property database Web site and see the picture of the house at the address we're at," he said. "I can send my colleagues the link to the page, while we're all onsite, so there's no confusion about which house we're about to enter."

Officers can search a person's name and receive an individual's complete record, including a photo if available. They also can look up warrants, license plates, Social Security numbers and more.

During periods of reduced activity, officers can use the BlackBerry to take care of e-mail. They can communicate with other officers and supervisors, or arrange their schedules, all from one device.

Officers in patrol cars can use laptops, but those who patrol on foot cannot. Neither can officers on motorcycles, bicycles or horseback. Undercover officers also have far less access to laptops than most.

In undercover work, staying covert is a high priority. Officers can't stay unobtrusive at night if they're lit up by the screen from a laptop. They simply can't use a laptop at night if they're on a stakeout. With Sprint PocketCop on BlackBerry, undercover officers can still have access to the information they need — anytime, any place — without being noticed.

## Low Cost, Immediate Improvement

Cost was another big factor. Small police departments often don't have the funds for expensive technology. Thus, they're always looking for the most cost-effective use of their resources.

"The BlackBerry smartphones are a huge cost advantage to groups such as the Metro Parks organization," said Thomas Welch, systems administrator for the county. "You can deploy a BlackBerry smartphone with software for about \$1,000 per user, as compared to \$4,500 for a laptop. So we spend about 20 percent of what it could have cost, and we get the same access to police information in a mobile device."

In addition to its numerous features, light weight and ability to access criminal databases, the Sprint PocketCop solution for BlackBerry allows officers to be more effective in the field. And their ability to pull up information themselves lightens the load on dispatchers who are busy enough — often serving multiple agencies. With Sprint PocketCop on the BlackBerry smartphone, officers are more likely to run a license plate or a suspect check, for example, because they can do it on their own without impacting dispatch. Dispatch is liberated from the more routine calls, and officers get the information they need when they need it. That's just one more way that this powerful solution gives law enforcement officers more vital info and real-time intelligence in the field than they've ever had before.



For more information  
on PocketCop on BlackBerry, go to  
[www.bio-key.com/ps/pocketcop-reg.asp](http://www.bio-key.com/ps/pocketcop-reg.asp)  
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