

NW3C Announces Study on Internet Fraud Preparedness Conducted by Dr. Ronald G. Burns

Research investigates law enforcement resources, collaboration, control, and prevention of Internet fraud

A study of 2,344 law enforcement agencies, designed to gauge law enforcement's preparedness and involvement in preventing and investigating Internet fraud, shows U.S. law enforcement officers do not believe they have the necessary resources or staff to adequately investigate Internet fraud.

In research sponsored by NW3C, Ronald G. Burns, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at Texas Christian University, tackled the topic "Internet Fraud: Law Enforcement Resources, Collaboration, Control, and Prevention."

Perception is a problem—the perception that street crime is more serious than economic crime. Investigators at 700 of the biggest agencies across the U.S. simply do not believe their department or law enforcement in general views Internet fraud as problematic as they do.

"In accordance with society's traditional focus upon conventional street crimes, there is a notable absence of information pertaining to economic crimes, specifically Internet fraud," Burns said. "Arguably, law enforcement's responses to these incidents are limited and disorganized, despite the documented substantial impact that such acts have upon society and the numerous projections that they will continue to increase in frequency."

Burns' study attempts to assess the ability of various levels of law enforcement to control and prevent Internet fraud, with a particular emphasis on large local and county agencies. Results from the nationwide survey were analyzed and areas for further research were identified. The research concludes that law enforcement:

- supports additional legislation to more clearly define Internet fraud, to more clearly define law enforcement boundaries with regard to Internet fraud, to deter Internet fraud offenders, and to punish Internet fraud offenders
- suggests that jurisdictional issues hamper their efforts to fight Internet fraud
- is generally unaware of helpful resources to fight Internet fraud
- notes that Internet fraud occurs on a regular basis within their jurisdictions

"More Americans than ever are directly experiencing, and subsequently reporting, incidents of Internet fraud," said John Kane, NW3C Research Manager. "Complaints to NW3C's Internet Fraud Complaint Center have tripled

in the last year alone. It is clear that local, state, and federal law enforcement are vital to limiting the growth of this problem. The study is significant because it sheds light on the challenges these groups face in combating the frauds of today and preparing for the financial crimes of tomorrow. NW3C recognized the importance of illuminating these issues and found Dr. Burns' research well worth supporting."

Burns and other members of the White Collar Crime Research Consortium (WCCRC) submitted proposals to NW3C for a research contract program. The mission of the WCCRC is to promote increased public awareness of the impact and burden of white-collar crime on society through dedicated research. Membership comprises more than 100 academicians and law enforcement practitioners, from across the nation, interested in enhancing and enriching knowledge in this area.

About NW3C Research

NW3C is a resource of economic and cyber crime information for law enforcement member agencies, and public and private entities. NW3C's research goal is to identify the impact of economic crime, in hopes of increasing awareness of the problem and the ability to control it.