



Defenders track down missing sex offenders

Law enforcement address Michigan absconder problem

Author: Marc Santia, Investigative Reporter, marcs@wdiv.com

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DETROIT -



Absconders: Those sex offenders who fail to verify their address.

They could be living in your neighborhood and you would never know.

It's Michigan State Police trooper Craig Tuer's job to find out where they are.

"It's very important to track these guys down," said Tuer, who is the sex offender registry's coordinator for southeast Michigan.

"Many of the individuals who are absconders are committing other crimes," he said. "Usually when these guys fall off the radar there is a reason they disappeared."

There are more than 600 absconders from Metro Detroit alone. Only three full-time law enforcement officers -- two with the Detroit police-- are assigned to deal with the sex offender registry and also look for absconders.

From surveillance to monitoring power and looking for fresh footprints in the snow, tracking down an offender takes an average of three to five days, and there is no guarantee an arrest will be made.



"Part of the nature of becoming an absconder is the desire not to be found," said Tuer. "So a lot of these individuals will go to great lengths not to reveal their location."

The Defenders investigation has exposed absconders in Metro Detroit and caught the eye of those who can make change.

Former Macomb County Sheriff and current county executive who also sits on a law enforcement committee for the governor, Mark Hackel, said the absconder issue needs to be addressed.

"Absconders are people who are once again going to go out there and prey on society," Hackel said. "If they are going to go after absconders, somebody has to be responsible for it so that everyone can say, 'Hey, listen, we know we have someone who hasn't signed up and has not been responsive and we don't know where they are at.' It should be handed off to somebody who has responsibility and accountability and say, 'We've got that.'"

Right now, that does not exist and there is no group solely dedicated to looking for absconders.

"We shouldn't all be doing the same things," Hackel said. "I think what we should be doing is figuring out is there a higher level by county, region? Or is the state taking on that responsibility, saying, 'You know what, we're going after absconders.'"

Hackel said one solution could be that assignments must be clearly designated. He said responsibilities must be assigned to specific people or groups.

"In this state, until we get serious about consolidating, restructuring and defining roles and responsibilities, we are going to continue being confused and the public will be confused," he said. "I really don't see how there is



an excuse."

Vice Roy is a registered sex offender. Like the majority of offenders, Roy follows the rules and verifies his address with police.

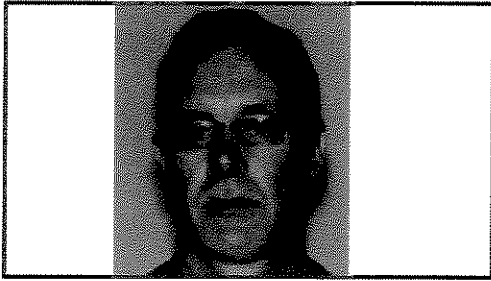
"You come in. You give them your ID, any changes and then you go. It's so easy," Roy said.

It takes just minutes to check in. Roy said compliance is better than returning to prison.

"You know what you have to risk. It doesn't make sense not to bring your butt in here," he said.

For those who choose not to check in, Roy said there is no excuse.

"They give us a bad name when they don't do what they need to do and make it harder on the rest of us, and they're gonna make it harder on themselves," Roy said.



Tuer is receiving help from the U.S. Marshalls and Harper Woods police. He arrested Michael Addy Sr., an absconder featured on Local 4. Officers said Addy had been under the radar for more than three years.

Tuer said departments have been working together to keep the community safe while police and politicians try to solve the absconder problem.

The U.S. Marshalls, MSP and Oakland County Sheriff's Office have reduced non-compliant sex offenders in Pontiac from 91 to 60 within months.

"We're knocking those numbers down daily," Tuer said. "There are five meetings set up in this particular area in the next 30 days specifically directed to addressing the sex offender registry issues."

He said tracking down absconders does make a difference and he has seen it first hand. Tuer has caught absconders who were living under the radar and victimizing people in the community. One sex offender is now serving two life sentences.

Michigan Public Sex Offender Registry: www.mipsor.state.mi.us



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