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Officials: Remote monitoring system working well for Community Corrections

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LAPEER — After four months of use, Community Corrections is pleased with how the new remote monitoring system they brought on board in March is working out, Community Corrections Coordinator David Stevens told the Lapeer County Board of Commissioners on Thursday.

Community Corrections leased GPS ankle units and Continuous Alcohol Monitoring (CAM) ankle units from SCRAM Systems, which allows offenders to be monitored, whether as a condition of bond or probation, or as part of sentencing. The units are a measure to keep the community safe — either by keeping an offender from consuming alcohol or to enforce geographic boundaries.

The CAM unit is a breathalyzer that gets strapped to the ankle and takes readings every 30 minutes based on the insensible perspiration of ethanol vapors through the skin. The continuous nature of the testing means people can't beat the test like many do when they have to go in for a standard breath test. Thanks to years of research, dozens of independent studies and a number of court cases, the CAM readings have been determined to have a minuscule margin of error and are admissible in court.

For higher-risk offenders, the GPS bracelet will drop a pin every minute indicating the wearer's location, and it can be programmed to allow for home, workplace, and a specific route to and from work, for example. The location reports are then consolidated and any out-of-boundary marks are noted. A vibration or an audible tone can be sent to the unit remotely to warn the wearer.

If a non-compliance "event" is determined by staff at SCRAM, both Stevens and Assistant Community Corrections Coordinator Wendy Parks will receive emails and text messages alerting them, so appropriate action can be taken.

Since implementation in March, Stevens said, they have used the systems for a total of 29 clients, with 13 actively being monitored at this time.

"We probably would have at least doubled that if the courts were going," he said.

The option to use the remote monitoring is beneficial to everyone involved, including the offenders, and Stevens said many are thrilled to have a local hub for service such as adjustments or addressing equipment issues as well.

"Prior to us having this they had to go to Bay City, Port Huron, or a place in Macomb," he said.

Remote monitoring has also been known to cut down on repeat offenses, and it has generated about \$14,000 in revenue so far as well, some of which is a direct benefit to Community Corrections.