

Lexington officer made an iPhone app to look up Kentucky laws

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Lexington police Officer Clifton Grimm was just trying to make his life easier when he programmed an iPhone application to put an interactive list of Kentucky laws at his fingertips.

"I just figured I'll just make it for myself, and if it's halfway useful, that's cool," Grimm said.

Instead, the app, called KY UORS on the iPhone app store, has proven to be a hit.

In a little less than a year on the market, the \$1.99 application has been downloaded by about 1,000 people statewide, including officers, state troopers, attorneys and social workers.

And they've all heard about it through word of mouth.

"Everybody knows somebody who works in another department," Grimm said.

For hundreds of Lexington officers with iPhones, the app has all but replaced the laminated "cheat sheets" they carry in their cruisers, which remind them about what charges are appropriate for various crimes.

That's because all of the approximately 2,100 Kentucky Revised Statutes can be read in their entirety on Grimm's app.

For example, if an officer forgets what constitutes a charge of harassing communications, with just a few taps he or she can read KRS 525.080, which says that a person is guilty of harassing communications if he or she "communicates with a person, anonymously or otherwise ... in a manner which causes annoyance or alarm and serves no purpose."

The laws also define the levels of the crime; harassing communications is a class B misdemeanor.

Officer Dennis Smith, a patrol officer, said he uses the app for KRS numbers, which must be written on police reports.

"It just saves a lot of time," he said. "I don't have to pull up my actual KRS manual or my cheat sheets."

In a citywide budget crunch when officers are doing more with less, Lexington police spokeswoman Sherelle Roberts said Grimm's app is a good example of ingenuity and efficiency.

Smith agreed.

"We need to work smarter, not harder. This is one way to work smarter," he said.

The phone has to have access to the Internet to use the app, because tapping a statute redirects users to the state's Web site. That ensures that the laws are always up to date. Laws are subject to change after each legislative session, but the state's Web site is updated almost immediately, Grimm said.

All Grimm has to do is update the links, then send out a small update to people who use the app.

"Whenever (the state) comes out with new charges, we know because they send out notices to police departments," he said.

The app is available to anyone. It can be an entertaining read for people who aren't aware of some of Kentucky's rarely used laws. (For example, abandoning a refrigerator is a class B misdemeanor if the door is attached and if the refrigerator has a capacity of at least 1.5 cubic feet.)

Grimm worked on the app for about seven months before finishing it last May, he said.

A 1997 graduate of the University of Kentucky, Grimm has a bachelor's degree in theater arts, design and technology, and he moonlights as a self-taught computer programmer. He has experience in Web programming and other programming languages, but he learned a new programming language to interact with the iPhone, with the help of a \$99 development kit.

The iPhone isn't mandatory, but most Lexington officers have one because it's easily compatible with calendars, email and other applications that officers use on their computers, Roberts said.

Officers have memorized the text of the laws they use the most, but Roberts said it's a good idea to have an app on hand.

"One of the most important things is they have to know the law," she said. "Being able to actually look up something they're not that familiar with is a great tool."

Not all officers have iPhones, and the officers who carry Android phones have asked Grimm to make an app for them. An officer in Northern Kentucky also asked Grimm to make a version optimized for the Apple iPad's larger screen. Grimm's app is compatible with the iPad, but in a lower resolution.

Grimm said he'll get around to making other versions of the app when he finds time between working and spending time with his wife and two young children.

Programming "is really part-time," he said. "I have a day job, so I got to get to it when I get to it."

Read more: <http://www.kentucky.com/2011/04/18/1711399/lexington-officer-made-an-iphone.html#ixzz1Jycv9yWL>