

City of Hailey

POLICE DEPARTMENT

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CHIEF OF POLICE

JEFF M. GUNTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hailey Police Launches Nixle to Enhance Communications

The Hailey Police Department has been in the process of installing NIXLE; an online notification service for law enforcement, governmental agencies, and community groups. This is one of several ways that the department is expanding its use of up-to-date Internet technology to enhance our communications with the citizens we serve. According to Hailey Chief of Police Jeff Gunter, “We are utilizing Nixle to provide The City of Hailey and the surrounding area with information that is both proximate and personally relevant to our community.” Nixle is a free web-based program where users can sign up for e-mail or text message notifications in their area.

“It’s a modern communication gateway for the community,” said Gunter, who will be maintaining the site with Administrative Assistant Christina Leos. “I think it just keeps the community up to date and connected with the police department. With Nixle we will be updating the community about anything that will impact them and we feel that is vitally important in maintaining our relationship with our fellow stakeholders,” Leos said.

Messages will be put into three different categories; advisory, community, or alert:

Alerts are used for weather warnings; advisories are used for traffic accidents, street closures or construction; and community is used for criminal notifications such as breaking and entering, ongoing investigations, missing children/runaways/senior citizens, fraud investigations/bad checks, stolen vehicles and/or property.

“By subcategorizing these, we can send messages to certain groups like neighborhood watches if there are break-ins or suspicious activity in that certain area or to the Hailey Main Street businesses if we have bad checks or counterfeit bills,” Leos said.

Leos said the benefit of the program is that it allows the community to be alerted without having to necessarily be involved. “You won’t be receiving texts or e-mails every four or five hours, but it will allow you to be informed on what’s going on in the area. A lot of people only get involved when something bad happens. We are hoping to see an increase in reporting crimes.”

Gunter added that the police department relies on citizen’s assistance with being extra eyes and ears. “Unfortunately, police don’t have regular foot patrol beats like back in the day,” he said. “The neighbors know what’s right or wrong in their neighborhood – what’s out of place, who’s fighting about what and the more they report it, the better. Every little bit helps.”

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For the department, Nixle allows the capability of sending out a mass message without having to worry about getting a response back. It's a one-way communication device. You can't e-mail or text back a message. Gunter added, "It is our hope that this service will help our department maintain a high level or standard of service that we strive to provide. We are asking citizens to consider participating in this program to help us inform them of the important information that involves the community."

Currently over 4,600 public safety agencies use Nixle to alert residents in their communities across the nation. To register for Nixle, go to www.nixle.com and register your e-mail and/or cell phone number, then type in your zip code to see what agencies in your area use the service. "It's just really easy to be able to text your zip code or a key word into Nixle to sign up," Gunter said. Nixle doesn't take an in-depth registration process.

People can choose to either use e-mail or text or they can sign up for both options. While Nixle has the capability for e-mail, it always has the capability for text messages. Sometimes people don't check their e-mail on a regular basis and there is information that would have been nice to know sooner than later. So, with the text messaging option, they can get the information as soon as it's sent out and who doesn't have a cellular phone these days? The only drawback to the text messaging option is that it only allows a certain amount of characters to be sent out per message. However, the agency can send the base message and then refer the message to an e-mail notification that would include more information or pictures.

Once someone registers for Nixle and are in the system, the Hailey Police Department has no way to see who has signed up to receive alerts. I don't have a clue who is in the system and who is not. Gunter added, "There is no way for me to monitor that, what it will tell us is how many people have signed up to receive notifications."

The Hailey Police Department would also like the community to be aware that they can always call the department at 208-788-3531 with any questions or concerns, or make us aware of an issue by e-mail at submitatip@haileycityhall.org. We also encourage citizens to stay up-to-date with our agency on our website at www.haileycityhall.org/police/HaileyPoliceDepartment, or on social media at www.facebook.com/haileypolice and on twitter @HaileyPolice. These sites will be updated with Hailey Police breaking news stories.

The Hailey Police Department is very excited to be connected more than ever with the people that live, visit, and work on our great city.