

## **Hackers beware - county upgrading its systems**

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Pike's lacking computer system could be a hacker's dream, experts say. However, fiscal court has plans to upgrade the county.

The assessment was done at the request of Fiscal Court, said assessor Ernie Wood, of the eCommunity Strategies Division (eCS) of ConnectKentucky - the public/private partnership leading the Prescription for Innovation, Kentucky's comprehensive plan to accelerate technology growth throughout the state. Launched by Gov. Ernie Fletcher in 2004, Prescription for Innovation had four goals - full broadband coverage by 2007's end, dramatically improved use of computers and the Internet by Kentuckians, a meaningful online presence for all communities, and eCommunity Leadership Teams in every county to plan technology growth strategies for every sector of the community.

The county is at about 87 percent regarding broadband coverage, said Energy Technology Director Roger Ford, and ConnectKentucky, which is helping with the implementation of a county Web site, reported 68 percent of Pike County homes had computers in 2005.

While the Pike County leadership team, made up of people from nine sectors, determined what was needed to get the county to where it needed to be, people from the government sector thought the county needed an assessment, Wood said, adding, "I spent five days on the ground and interviewed 28 people. Everybody was cooperative and wants to move forward."

Although the Pike County administration is committed to improving information technology (IT) through upgrades, according to the assessment, the current system is behind times, but no more so than other counties in the state, said Wood, who has been in the IT business for decades, serving as a IBM database administrator for five years.

The county lacks proper networking, system administration, security and backup procedures, the assessment shows, all of which are major business risks.

In what Wood called the "natural evolution" of technology, Ford said the county would upgrade individual departments with new technology as it became available and the county could afford it.

There is no onsite support, and there are large deficiencies in security, administration, connectivity, and application sharing, with sporadic or no backup processes, and no firewall or anti-virus policy exists, the assessment reported.

“They have a lot of compartmentalized sections and need someone who can look at the whole system and see that the servers are talking to each other,” Wood said.

One of the biggest issues is the need for solid backups and firewalls - layers which keep those looking to steal identities from hacking into the county system. There have been no breaches of security as far as he could tell, Wood said, but these are good safeguards which need to be addressed.

Fiscal Court is planning to look for funding to implement a county-wide system, with the help of ConnectKentucky, Ford said, asserting Pike would serve as a pilot project for other rural communities.

“This Fiscal Court understands the crucial need for Pike County to have the latest information technology. We realize that we cannot move fully ahead with our county's economic development until we better implement and apply technology,” County Judge-Executive Wayne T. Rutherford said.

Upgrading the county's IT systems to the point of allowing all county offices - the county clerk, solid waste, the road department, etc., - to communicate would also help improve health and emergency services, Ford said, which could open the door for Homeland Security funding.

The county put in wireless internet services before the last Hillbilly Days and plans to have the service in all county parks, but have been held up due to lack of broadband in some of the more remote areas, Ford said.

Since Prescription for Innovation's launch, the availability and use of broadband across the state has increased 50 percent, with 93 percent of Kentucky homes being able to access broadband.

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