

Governor announces automated warrant process

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SANTA FE — State courts and the Department of Public Safety announced moves to streamline the exchange of warrant information through a new electronic process, the Administrative Office of the Courts and the New Mexico State Police stated in a press release published Jan. 29.

Through these changes, the process of automating the electronic delivery of warrants will allow law enforcement to know that a person is subject to arrest within minutes after a court issues a warrant. Any changes to warrants will be shared on a real-time basis with DPS, enabling officers to immediately know when a person has cleared a warrant or a court has canceled the warrant authorizing an arrest.

Real-time updates will lessen the possibility that a person is arrested mistakenly because of out-of-date warrant information, or that someone wanted on a newly issued warrant is inadvertently let go during a traffic stop because it did not yet appear in a national database when officers checked for outstanding warrants.

With the new electronic procedures, which began on Jan. 29, courts will be notified more rapidly when a warrant has been served on an individual. Automated updates will be made in court files to indicate that a criminal and traffic case can proceed because there is no longer an outstanding warrant.

“This collaborative project by the judicial and executive branches of government will improve the criminal justice system,” Supreme Court Chief Justice C. Shannon Bacon said. “Courts and DPS will more efficiently process warrants, providing law enforcement with immediate access to the most up-to-date warrant records. Court case records also will be updated automatically after warrants are served.”

New Mexico State Police Chief Troy Weisler showed his support for the new system.

“This is one of the many ways we are using technology to improve the services we provide to the citizens of New Mexico. I am excited to be part of this innovative approach, which will contribute to overall public safety by getting my officers the warrant information needed in a

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more timely and accurate manner,” he said. “As time goes on this will benefit other law enforcement agencies across the state, and I am proud the New Mexico State Police is at the forefront of implementing this system.”

Under the new process, courts will automatically transmit an electronic warrant to DPS after a judge signs it. DPS enters the information into a federal criminal justice database – the National Crime Information Center – that law enforcement officers use to determine whether there is an active warrant for someone’s arrest.

With the old system, warrants were sent to DPS in varying ways. Paper copies were mailed by courts in some instances. Other courts made warrants available through online file sharing. District attorneys also were responsible for delivering some warrants to DPS after they dropped off paper documents asking a court to issue them.

DPS and the State Police, which deal with warrants across the state, and courts in 26 counties will pilot the first phase of the electronic warrant process. Nearly three-fourths of the state’s magistrate courts are participating in the pilot project, including the Gallup Magistrate Court. Magistrate courts handle traffic cases, which account for many warrants issued by courts.

It is expected that more court locations and law enforcement agencies will be incorporated in the new warrant process in the future.

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