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DPS Distributes ComputerCOP Software to Combat Online Child Predation

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – In an effort to help parents protect their children on the internet, the Department of Public Safety utilized federal grant funds to purchase and distribute the ComputerCOP software package to every school, public library, and police agency in Alaska.

The software should foster and initiate communication between parents and children regarding the positive and negative uses for the internet. This program is easy to use, and allows parents to monitor and manage images, information, and emails that have been downloaded on their home computer.

The intent is for schools and public libraries to put copies of this software program into their resource library and make it available to check out by parents. In addition, law enforcement agencies throughout the state have received copies of the program for their community policing programs.

Funding for the purchase of the program came through grants received through the Alaska State Troopers rural policing program and the D.A.R.E. program. School Resource Officers, D.A.R.E. Officers, and Village Public Safety Officers who teach an internet safety course to parents will be provided with a copy of the ComputerCOP software program for every parent that attends.

Over one billion people use the internet, and Alaska has one of the highest per capita internet usages in the nation. Our children are at the highest risk for internet-related sexual abuse between the ages of 13 and 16. Nationally, 1 in 4 children are exposed to unwanted nudity, 1 in 5 children are exposed to sexual solicitation, and 1 in 17 children are threatened or harassed. Fifty-eight percent of children admit that someone has said mean or hurtful things to them and 53% of children have admitted to saying mean or hurtful things to another. Finally, 42% of students' grades 4 – 8 say they have been bullied online.

The internet is a valuable resource, and for Alaskans; it helps connect us with the rest of the world. Unfortunately, not all of the people that use the internet are trustworthy or honest; in fact, many people out there want to harm our children. Our home computers allow predators easy access to our loved ones. These predators can easily threaten our children's safety by exposing them to material that promotes violence, drug use, and pornography.

Combining the use of this product to monitor their children's activity, talk to their children about the hidden dangers of the internet and setting rules for their web use, will help parents to protect their children and keep cyberspace strangers out of Alaskan homes.

"I'm urging parents to monitor their kids' internet activities by using the ComputerCOP Software," said Joe Masters, Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. "You know our children are only 20 percent of our population but 100 percent of our future. Together we can make a difference. Working together we can keep our children safe."

Copies of this software program have been sent to schools, public libraries, and local police agencies, Alaska State Trooper Detachments, D.A.R.E. Officers, Alaska State Troopers that serve as School Resource Officers, and Village Public Safety Officers.

If you have any questions feel free to contact Naomi Sweetman, DPS Statewide D.A.R.E. Coordinator, at 907-245-4582. Reporters can pick up a copy of the software at DPS headquarters.