

Tackett ready to prosecute sex offenders who missed to deadline

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By RYAN SMITH
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The deadline passed Sunday for the 39 registered sex offenders in Cole County to move at least 1,000 feet away from schools and day cares, and Prosecutor Bill Tackett said he is ready to prosecute those who haven't done so.

"They have two options — they either move or they are moved to prison, it's that simple," said Tackett.

Last month, Tackett announced he was mailing notices to 39 sex offenders who lived too close to schools and day cares in Cole County that they had until school started — about a month's time —

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to move.

"I've tried to give them sufficient notification, and I don't think there's many of them that have defenses of a lack of knowledge," Tackett added.

Tackett gave maps, offender information, and other material to the Jefferson City Police Department and the Cole County Sheriff's Office on Monday morning, and he said the prosecutor's office has "what we need to prosecute this."

Jefferson City Police Chief Roger Schroeder and Cole County Sheriff Greg White both said they needed time to review the prosecutor's information, but noted that action would be taken if crimes were being committed.

"We'll dispatch officers to check out those residences and

gather information and then make an assessment on what the next step will be," said Schroeder.

The sex offender issue has been one that is on "virtually everyone's radar screens," said Tackett. "No matter where I go, it seems like people are talking about it.

"People are really concerned about this issue."

The actual language of the law passed last year says that people who have been convicted of any of a number of sex-related crimes "shall not establish residency within 1,000 feet of any public school ... private school (up to the 12th grade) or child-care facility ... which is in existence at the time

such residency is established."

County officials have created a map showing where those offenders live, and how close their listed addresses are to both school and licensed day care facilities.

The map is posted on the prosecutor's Web site, www.colecopa.com.

Tackett said he has been contacted in past few weeks from some of the offenders on the map, saying that had moved or had planned to move before the deadline.

"That's good," said Tackett. "Ideally, law enforcement goes out this week and they are all gone."

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