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Boston Police launch new website designed to be faster, more secure

Posted by Matt Rocheleau August 20, 2013 04:21 PM

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(BPDNews.com)

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The Boston Police Department launched a new website this week that the department says will allow information, including crime reports and community alerts, to be posted faster and read more easily.

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The new bpdnews.com features a responsive design, which refits content on the website to match the screen size of each user, making it easier to navigate for both desktop and mobile users, said Deputy Superintendent John Daley, who helped oversee the creation of the new site.

Along with a fresh look and color scheme, the website is also simpler for department personnel to update and has better security and reliability, he said.

“Like anything, the look of the website becomes kind of dated over time if it isn’t changed. So we thought it was time for a bit of a facelift,” Daley said.

The new site also allows for better integration with the department’s social media accounts, police spokeswoman Cheryl Fiandaca said in an e-mail. And, the department eventually plans to use the site’s new capabilities to post “sophisticated mapping and data graphs.”

“We’d like to do more infographics,” Daley explained. “We have to train the staff on some of those tools, but we’re ready to implement them soon.”

The new site, funded through the department’s annual operating budget, took about six months to build.

It was developed internally by a team of about a half-dozen personnel from the department’s bureau of public information, multimedia unit and informational services group who worked on the project in addition to their normal duties, Daley said.

“[Boston Police] Commissioner [Edward F. Davis] understands the value of the blog and having a direct connection to the community,” Fiandaca wrote. “He wanted an updated site that could grow and had flexibility.”

The old website was vulnerable, according to Daley.

In [Feb. 2012](#), a cyberattack by hackers upset over the department’s handling of Occupy Boston shutdown the website for six days. In [Oct. 2011](#), various websites used by members of the police department, including the Boston Police Patrolmen’s Association website, were hacked.

And, heavy traffic in the hours and days immediately after the Marathon

bombings and the ensuing manhunt caused bpdnews.com to load slowly and it became inaccessible at times for visitors trying to read the site and for department personnel trying to update it, Daley said.

The new website is better equipped to handle surges in traffic and has better security to protect against cyberattacks.

“In general when we put the [old] site up, it was something we did quickly and we had a provider that was very good to us, but I don’t think they realized the traffic we’d get, and at times it wasn’t able to handle it,” he said.

The company that used to host the website donated the service, said Daley, who declined to name the company.

The new site is hosted by [Squarespace](#), which department personnel used to help build the website. He said he did not know the exact cost to host the website, but said it is less than \$1,000 annually.

The formal launch date for the new site was Monday, though the new look has been publicly available since at least Sunday afternoon.

Daley said the department hopes to eventually develop mobile applications, including for Android and iOS devices. He declined to say when such apps might be released.

He said the department also welcomes ideas from the public on how to improve its website and other communications.

Fiandaca encouraged web users to “like” the department on Facebook and to follow the department’s Twitter account.

“We invite visitors to interact and stay connected,” she said.

“The blog allows the department to have direct contact with the community,” she added. “Instead of waiting for traditional media to report news, the BPD is reporting its own news right on the blog. It will help us stay connected and will keep residents and visitors informed.”

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