

Sex Offender Information

Many times I get phone calls asking about a sex offender in the area or concerns about someone who has been seen who is on the Department of Public Safety (DPS) Sex Offender website. There are many urban legends that I get asked about and there are many facts of which people are unaware. I would like to take this opportunity to offer some facts and guidelines we follow in dealing with sex offenders here in our community.

Before we get to the sex offenders, let me share with you some startling facts that were brought to my attention: (1) About 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before his/her 18th birthday; (2) 20% are abused before age 8; (3) Females are 5 times more likely to be abused than males; (4) 73% of child victims do not tell anyone about the abuse for at least one year; (5) Less than 3% of child sexual abuse perpetrators serve jail time for their offense; and (6) only 29% of parents have talked to the children about sexual abuse. These are just some of the facts pertaining to sex offenders.

Prevention is the best cure for abuse and it starts in your own home. Be aware of your surroundings, talk to your children, and know whom they are with and where they go. Communicate and educate to fight this crime before it gets started.

The Rockport Police Department handles an average of about 32 sex offenders in our city limits. For the 2013 year, there were 9 sexual assault and 4 failure to comply cases filed. There are certain risk levels with these sex offenders. Many are low risk and a few are high risk offenders. High risk offenders have a mandatory 90 day registration commitment. Each 90 days, the offender must report to me and we will go over any changes that have occurred, from health issues, career changes, transportation and address changes. The offender's current photograph is compared to his present appearance and if there needs to be an update, a new photograph is taken. As for the moderate to low risk offenders, the same procedures are followed, except they report only once a year for updates. Many ask me what happens between those times with the offenders. After the offender's registration date, he or she is required by Chapter 62 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to provide me with any updates or changes that occurred from the last update. There is a time limit to report these changes and any failure to do so will result in arrest for Failure to Comply as a Registered Sex Offender. The Rockport Police Department works closely with the U.S. Marshal, F.B.I., Texas Department of Public Safety and the Aransas County Sheriff's Department. These agencies deal with local sex offenders and network the information needed to maintain a detailed data base. Throughout the year, offenders are checked on to make sure the information they provided is current.

The Texas Sex Offender Registration Program was enacted on September 11, 1991. Since its creation, the Texas Sex Offender Registration Program has been strengthened every legislative session. These changes have added criminal offenses requiring registration, lengthened the time period sex offenders have to register, provided for community notification of sex offenders, and increased criminal penalties for failure to comply with registration requirements.

The information generated by the Rockport Police Department is transferred electronically to the DPS Sex Offender website. This information is confirmed and placed in the data base as public information.

Many times I am asked why offenders do not have signs in their yards indicating they are sex offenders. Several years ago, this was the case in certain jurisdictions and a requirement by certain courts. Since those days, with the availability of internet, social media and post card notification by DPS, that is unnecessary.

The next most common comment is that the offender was seen in the presence of a juvenile. Most registered sex offenders in our community have families and households where there are children. If an offender is not on parole or probation or does not have conditions set by a court, it is acceptable to have that communication.

Not only do I maintain and provide information on the offenders, but during the interviews, I take the time to visit with each one to make sure there are no underlying issues and try to guide them away from any potential problems. It is our goal to maintain a program that is essential to the community and provides the needed information and education to provide a safe and secure environment. It takes all of us working together to make a successful and productive program.

Please feel free to contact me, Detective James Wilson at the City of Rockport Police Department at 361-790-1107 for any Sex Offender Registration concerns, or visit the DPS website at <https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/sexoffender/>.