

Bounty being offered for tips on drug labs

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A bounty of "no less than \$500" is being offered by Waco Crime Stoppers for information that leads to "the busting of methamphetamine labs for the month of November," said Waco Police Sgt. Steve Beatty.

"It could be up to \$1,000, but no less than \$500," said Beatty, supervisor of the Crime Prevention section of the Waco Police Department. Crime Stoppers is a unit of Crime Prevention.

The phone number to call is 753-HELP, he said, and callers do not have to reveal their identities.

The reward offer is open "to anybody that reads your paper. If they live outside the county, they can call in. Our people go everywhere," he said, mentioning recent raids on labs in Hill County and one this week in Woodway.

The reward offer is in response to the increased public awareness of drug manufacturing operations in Central Texas because of the large number of drug labs being raided by law enforcement officers, he said.

"There seems to be an increased interest in the drug problem in the county and surrounding counties," Beatty said.

Lt. Bob McCollum of the Waco police department's drug enforcement unit, said the reward will be paid for any illegal drug manufacturing laboratory.

"In this area, about the only thing we have experienced so far are methamphetamine and amphetamine labs," he said. Police are investigating the possibility of labs for the new drug "Ecstasy" being set up in the area, but have

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not located any so far, he said.

Other types of narcotics are manufactured in illegal laboratories, but none of those labs have surfaced in Central Texas, McCollum said.

How would average people know if a drug lab were operating in their neighborhood?

"Unless a person is really on the inside, and has been inside the

house and seen the setup, their information is not going to be all that good," he said.

"If they're getting an odor in their neighborhood that they haven't been getting before, even if they don't know which house it is coming from, if we can send someone in there and get a bust, they will still get their reward," McCollum said.

People should be alert to unusual smells in their neighborhood,

he said. "It's not a smell they would associate with the area they live in." He said the odor could be described as smelling like chemicals, a hospital or a sewer.

He said to look for an unusual amount of traffic in and out of a house for short periods of time, especially if it occurs when the odor is present in the air.

If people have suspicions they should call Crime Stoppers, he said, and "We'll check it out."