

SAPS moves to an electronic fingerprint system

NETWORK REPORTER

THE South African Police Service (SAPS) is phasing out its manual name clearance criminal check system and will shortly be moving to an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) based on electronic fingerprint scans which will be used to establish the existence of a criminal record.

This is set to change the way that HR departments handle criminal checks of individuals for employment purposes, according to LexisNexis – leading global provider of content-enabled workflow solutions.

Previously HR departments used the name clearance database in a process based on a manual system whereby SAPS officials checked names and ID numbers against the Criminal Records Centre database. If a question mark was raised in this process, candidates were asked to have their fingerprints taken on paper at a police station to confirm a criminal record.

This manual process required substantial SAPS resources beyond the core role of police officers. As a result, SAPS has been moving to a single system of digitally-scanned fingerprints linked to an automated criminal database, called AFISwitch, in a project that has been running for close to three years in conjunction with leading biometrics company, Ideco Group Limited.

According to LexisNexis – whose South African headquarters is based in Durban – the implications of AFISwitch for HR depart-



Samantha Mudaly (left), LexisNexis human resources manager, whose criminal record is being checked via biometric scanning by Nelly Mlambo, human resources director, with the new AFISwitch electronic device. The new RefCheck tool from LexisNexis Risk Management can be accessed anywhere via the web and makes the recruitment process for businesses quick and accurate.

ments is that they will no longer be constrained by the restrictions of the name clearance database; and that criminal checks will be initiated via electronic fingerprint readers.

The basic search principles remain the same; consent is required before a check can be initiated and

is still based on ten fingerprints.

Previously a criminal record check could take many weeks to complete. With AFISwitch, HR departments wanting to run criminal checks will have scanners on site with the added advantage that through a system such as LexisNexis RefCheck they can have a

complete, accurate electronic report emailed to their desk within 48 hours. This single report includes criminal checks, academic record checks, credit checks,

drivers licence checks and the like. "In a country where crime and fraud is prevalent, and with an SAPS criminal database of more than 7 million records, we believe that LexisNexis RefCheck plays a vital role in helping organisations ensure that they make sound appointments, and that all the necessary checks are fast, accurate, discreet and easy to commission," says Billy Last, chief executive of LexisNexis South Africa.

The integration of the LexisNexis system with AFISwitch significantly bolsters the LexisNexis RefCheck offering. RefCheck is part of LexisNexis' risk management service, providing companies and HR recruitment firms with a comprehensive background screening solution, including credit, academic and criminal checks.

RefCheck provides one central point to type in the details of existing and potential employees and have all the necessary personal information verified as quickly and accurately as possible. Using a tool such as RefCheck, which can be accessed anywhere via the web, makes in-house screening viable for large corporates and

enables them to have control over their recruitment process.

RefCheck is the only ISO9001 approved system of its kind in South Africa. It is used by over 1 000 leading organisations including recruitment companies, corporate HR departments, government and small businesses.

