National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

The National Crime Information Center, or NCIC, has been called the lifeline of law enforcement—an electronic clearinghouse of crime data that can be tapped into by virtually every criminal justice agency nationwide, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It helps criminal justice professionals apprehend fugitives, locate missing persons, recover stolen property, and identify terrorists. It also assists law enforcement officers in performing their duties more safely and provides information necessary to protect the public.

NCIC was launched on January 27, 1967 with five files and 356,784 records. By the end of 2015, NCIC contained 12 million active records in 21 files. During 2015, NCIC averaged 12.6 million transactions per day.

About NCIC

The Files: The NCIC database currently consists of 21 files. There are seven property files containing records of stolen articles, boats, guns, license plates, parts, securities, and vehicles. There are 14 persons files, including: Supervised Release; National Sex Offender Registry; Foreign Fugitive; Immigration Violator; Missing Person; Protection Order; Unidentified Person; Protective Interest; Gang; Known or Appropriately Suspected Terrorist; Wanted Person; Identity Theft; Violent Person; and National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Denied Transaction. The system also contains images that can be associated with NCIC records to help agencies identify people and property items. The Interstate Identification Index, which contains automated criminal history record information, is accessible through the same network as NCIC.

How NCIC is Used: Criminal justice agencies enter records into NCIC that are accessible to law enforcement agencies nationwide. For example, a law enforcement officer can search NCIC during a traffic stop to determine if the vehicle in question is stolen or if the driver is wanted by law enforcement. The system responds instantly. However, a positive response from NCIC is not probable cause for an officer to take action. NCIC policy requires the inquiring agency to make contact with the entering agency to verify the information is accurate and up-to-date. Once the record is confirmed, the inquiring agency may take action to arrest a fugitive, return a missing person, charge a subject with violation of a protection order, or recover stolen property.

Cooperation is Key: NCIC has operated under a shared management concept between the FBI and federal, state, local, and tribal criminal justice users since its inception. There are two facets to the shared management concept—policy and functional.

The policy facet provides a means for user input on NCIC policy through the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Advisory Policy Board. The board enables NCIC users to make recommendations to the FBI Director for policy and operational enhancements to the system. The CJIS Division actively promotes the use of the system and its benefits through daily interaction with users—whether by phone, video teleconference, or e-mail; attendance at meetings and seminars; and via the advisory process.

The functional facet provides a means for agencies to access NCIC. The FBI provides a host computer and telecommunication lines to a single point of contact in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Canada, as well as federal criminal justice agencies. Those jurisdictions, in turn, operate their own computer systems, providing access to nearly all local criminal justice agencies and authorized non-criminal justice agencies nationwide. The entry, modification, and removal of records are the responsibility of the agency that entered them. The CJIS Division serves as the custodian of NCIC records.

Security and Quality Controls: The head of the CJIS Systems Agency—the criminal justice agency that has overall responsibility for the administration and usage of NCIC within a district, state, territory, or federal agency—appoints a CJIS Systems Officer (CSO) from its agency. The CSO is responsible for monitoring system use, enforcing system discipline and security, and assuring that all users follow operating procedures. NCIC policy establishes a number of security measures to ensure the privacy and integrity of the data. The information passing through the network is encrypted to prevent unauthorized access. Each user of the system is authenticated to ensure proper levels of access for every transaction. To further ascertain and verify the accuracy and integrity of the data, each agency must periodically validate its records. Agencies also must undergo periodic audits to ensure data quality and adherence to all security provisions.

Recent Accomplishments:

- Set a new single day record on July 28, 2016, by processing 17,492,427 NCIC transactions;
- Implemented the Violent Person File to provide law enforcement officers with a warning if they approach an encountered individual who has the propensity to be violent toward law enforcement;
- Implemented the NICS Denied Transaction File which contains records on individuals who have been determined to be prohibited persons according to the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 and were denied as a result of a NICS background check.

NCIC Success Story: Recently, a special agent with the U.S. Forest Service contacted the NCIC staff at the CJIS Division for assistance with off-line searches of purged NCIC records and past transactions in connection with a significant drug trafficking investigation in the Midwest. Several crucial off-line searches connected names of individuals with specific vehicles. This connection assisted in locating and identifying suspects associated with the case, and was invaluable in following the suspects' activities in relation to moving people, money, and products. To date, 20 people have been arrested and convicted, with more subjects identified and additional information regarding the drug trafficking organization uncovered. Approximately $1 million worth of property, illegal drugs, and contraband was seized, including marijuana, cocaine, firearms, vehicles, and cash.

NCIC Files

The NCIC database includes 21 files (seven property files and 14 person files).

- **Article File**: Records on stolen articles and lost public safety, homeland security, and critical infrastructure identification.
- **Gun File**: Records on stolen, lost, and recovered weapons and weapons used in the commission of crimes that are designated to expel a projectile by air, carbon dioxide, or explosive action.
- **Boat File**: Records on stolen boats.
- **Securities File**: Records on serially numbered stolen, embezzled, used for ransom, or counterfeit securities.
- **Vehicle File**: Records on stolen vehicles, vehicles involved in the commission of crimes, or vehicles that may be seized based on federally issued court order.
- **Vehicle and Boat Parts File**: Records on serially numbered stolen vehicle or boat parts.
- **License Plate File**: Records on stolen license plates.
- **Missing Persons File**: Records on individuals, including children, who have been reported missing to law enforcement and there is a reasonable concern for their safety.
- **Foreign Fugitive File**: Records on persons wanted by another country for a crime that would be a felony if it were committed in the United States.
- **Identity Theft File**: Records containing descriptive and other information that law enforcement personnel can use to determine if an individual is a victim of identity theft of if the individual might be using a false identity.
- **Immigration Violator File**: Records on criminal aliens whom immigration authorities have deported and aliens with outstanding administrative warrants of removal.
- **Protection Order File**: Records on individuals against whom protection orders have been issued.
- **Supervised Release File**: Records on individuals on probation, parole, or supervised release or released on their own recognizance or during pre-trial sentencing.
- **Unidentified Persons File**: Records on unidentified deceased persons, living persons who are unable to verify their identities, unidentified victims of catastrophes, and recovered body parts. The file cross-references unidentified bodies against records in the Missing Persons File.
- **Protective Interest**: Records on individuals who might pose a threat to the physical safety of protectees or their immediate families. Expands on the the U.S. Secret Service Protective File, originally created in 1983.
- **Gang File**: Records on violent gangs and their members.
- **Known or Appropriately Suspected Terrorist File**: Records on known or appropriately suspected terrorists in accordance with HSPD-6.
- **Wanted Persons File**: Records on individuals (including juveniles who will be tried as adults) for whom a federal warrant or a felony or misdemeanor warrant is outstanding.
- **National Sex Offender Registry File**: Records on individuals who are required to register in a jurisdiction's sex offender registry.
- **National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Denied Transaction File**: Records on individuals who have been determined to be "prohibited persons" according to the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act and were denied as a result of a NICS background check. (As of August 2012, records include last six months of denied transactions; in the future, records will include all denials.)
- **Violent Person File**: Once fully populated with data from our users, this file will contain records of persons with a violent criminal history and persons who have previously threatened law enforcement.

History and Milestones

In the 1960s, Director J. Edgar Hoover presided over the meeting during which the decision was made to implement a computer system that would centralize crime information from every state and provide that information to law enforcement throughout the nation. Working with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the FBI created an advisory board made up of state and local police to develop nationwide standards and consulted with the Commerce Department to build an effective telecommunications system. On January 27, 1967, the system was launched on 15 state and city computers that were tied into the FBI's central computer in Washington, D.C.—which at that time contained five files and 356,784 records on things like stolen autos, stolen license plates, stolen/missing guns, and wanted persons/fugitives. In its first year of operation, NCIC processed approximately 2.4 million transactions, an average of 5,479 transactions daily.

On January 27, 1967, the FBI launched the National Crime Information Center, or NCIC, an electronic clearinghouse of criminal justice information (mug shots, crime records, etc.) that can be tapped into by police officers in squad cars or by police agencies nationwide.

The first hit came in May 1967, when a New York City police officer—suspicious of a parked car—radioed in a request for an NCIC search of the license plate. Within 90 seconds, he was informed that the car had been stolen a month earlier in Boston. We got a report that the patrolman exclaimed, "It works! It works!" The most recent generation of NCIC became operational on July 11, 1999, enhancing the base capabilities of the legacy system and adding important new files. Some of the new capabilities include: the ability to accept, store, and retrieve digital images; expanded fields; and delayed inquiry notification. The delayed inquiry provides a capability for the system to automatically extract certain descriptive data from entries and use it to search the transaction log for inquiries conducted up to five days prior to the entry. Notifications are sent to both the entering and inquiring agency for further investigation.

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the NCIC's Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization File (VGTOF), took on added significance. Although the file had been a part of the NCIC since 1995, it contained few records. After 9/11, it became a central collection point for information about terror suspects. Within three years, the VGTOF grew to contain more than 100,000 records and was recently split into two separate files. On December 23, 2003, NCIC processed 4,712,643 transactions, with an average response time of .1119 seconds. On August 4, 2006, NCIC set a new record for transactions processed on a single day—6,050,879. The average response time—the time it takes for NCIC to receive, process, and respond to an inquiry—for these transactions was 0.0566 seconds. In January 2007, NCIC celebrated its 40th anniversary with a ceremony at the CJIS Division in Clarksburg, West Virginia.

NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics

- 2018 NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics (https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/2018-ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics.pdf/view)

Archived NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics:

- 2017 (https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/2017-ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics.pdf/view) | 2016 (https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/2016-ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics.pdf/view) | 2015 (https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/2015-ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics.pdf/view) | 2014 (https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2014) | 2013 (https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2013) | 2012 (https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2012) | 2011 (https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2011) | 2010 (https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2010) | 2009 (https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2009) | 2008 (https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2008) | 2007 (https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2007)