

## Frequently Asked Questions TipSoft SMS

### **Q – What does SMS stand for?**

**A –** Short Message Service. Text messages sent via cell phone are considered SMS messages.

### **Q – What exactly is TipSoft SMS?**

**A –** It is our new secure & anonymous Tip via Text Message product.

### **Q – Is this product secure enough for Crime Stoppers use?**

**A –** Yes, we feel that it is.

We've gone to great lengths to apply an encrypted alias ID to the originating number.

See our separate Security Summary document for more details.

### **Q – So just what does this SMS stuff make possible?**

**A –** Tipsters will now be able to submit an anonymous tip to you via text message from their cell phone. You will also be able to reply back to them without knowing their true identity or having access to the source phone number. You communicate with them via either your computer or by accessing a special application we've developed for use by PDA's. You do not receive any messages directly on a cellphone nor reply back to them via traditional text message from a cell phone. Much more sophisticated means are used for our deliveries.

### **Q – How do we communicate with the tipster via text message?**

**A –** We provide two ways for you to receive and reply to these text messages.

1 – By using our secure tip management online application thru your PC's browser

2 – Remotely, via our secure PDA browser based application

### **Q – Is there a limit to the amount of characters per message?**

**A –** Yes, in Canada it's 140 characters, while the US carriers allow 160.

### **Q – What are the various components of a text message used in the tip submission process?**

**A –** There are three main parts to a text message.

*The Short Code* – This is the actual number the tip is sent to rather than a phone number.

We use the same short code through all of N America.

It is a vanity code which we hope the public will find memorable.

It is CRIMES (274637) The public can just select the letters "CRIMES" and it will input 274637.

**It's always important to include the actual numbers in all printed materials since some of the new smart phones and nearly all PDA's use non-traditional keyboards and key mapping that could result in the letters CRIMES not equaling 274637 on their keypad.**

*The Keyword* – Keywords are always used with shared short codes to provide the proper routing. We use them to know which agency the tip should be directed to. When a keyword is needed, it is always entered as the first word in the body of the message. A tipster only needs to include the keyword on our SMS tips the very first time they submit a tip. After that, our system is intelligent enough to know where to route all subsequent traffic from that device. Vanity keywords are available, such as Los Angeles using LAPD as their keyword.

*The Message Body* – contains the keyword initially, and then the actual text of the message.

**Q – So how does the process actually work? What are the steps, etc?**

**A –** Ok, let's assume your agency ID is 100...

**1 –** The tipster sends in the first message, which is formatted with a keyword.

They will text "TIP100 plus their message" to CRIMES (274637)

Our server responds with a confirmation and their unique code number

**2 –** The message is then accessible by either of the above 2 ways for you to view tips

A copy of the message may also be sent to any email addresses for redundancy

**3 –** You may reply by simply typing in your response and clicking a button

**4 –** The tipster may respond back to your msg simply by replying.

No keyword or agency id or any other identifier is needed for any subsequent replies to you. Newly initiated messages by the tipster that are not straight replies to you may simply be sent to CRIMES, with no keyword being needed.

**Q – How does this all interface with our TipSoft software?**

**A –** Well, it will not interface at all with TipSoft v4.

However, it seamlessly integrates 100% with our all new TipSoft v5 Online.

SMS tips will come right into v5 just like any other tip received from a call center or via webtip.

Follow-Ups will be auto-threaded right into the original message with a new date/time stamp. The record in TipSoft will be flagged as updated and quick filters will alert you to the new information needing to be reviewed or possibly replied to.

**Q – What about tips received after hours and over weekends?**

**A –** You have a couple options there and we agree it's a concern and all tips need to be seen in a timely manner regardless of when received.

**1 –** You can be setup to receive an email notice any time a new tip is received.

You can then review the message from a PC or PDA regardless of your location.

**2 –** You could have a dedicated Call Center monitor your msgs as well. The two major

Crime Stoppers call centers in N America already offer to monitor WebTips rcvd after hours at no cost to their regular clients and they do the same for SMS tips. They both now also offer text tip monitoring for a modest fee even if they are not taking calls for your program, or agency. They will receive an email copy of each tip and if it was indeed really urgent they would take action on it just as if it came in via telephone. If not urgent, they simply delete the msg from their system and you will receive it the next time you access your tips. And of course many of our clients have their dispatch or comm centers keep an eye on incoming tips after hours.

**Q – Is this like a new digital text message 911 reporting system?**

**A – NO.** This should never be promoted for use in emergencies or on very urgent matters.

There are far too many things that could happen which could delay or even prevent delivery of the message and depending on when it is submitted it could be a while before it is even seen. This is a very complicated process that normally gets the message from phone to application in a few seconds, and vice-versa, but since it involves multiple servers, the public internet, an aggregator and many individual carriers there are many potential ways things can go wrong and delivery not go as expected. These things are out of our control and should be rare but they are inherent risks none the less. So again, use this as a new means to allow cell phone users to submit tips via text message but never promote it or rely upon it to be any type of emergency reporting tool.

**Q – So explain a little more about how we can communicate back with the tipster.**

**A –** You have full ability to communicate back with them via text message as much as needed. We call this Two-Way Dialog and we have already found how very important this is with our WebTips. Ideally you should do as much communicating with them as possible as soon as possible after receiving the tip since they are likely in a good position to carry on secure comms with you at that time. There is some inherent danger to the tipster if you were to initiate a message to them, unsolicited, after too much time has gone by. You never know who may be in their presence or who may have access to their phone to intercept or inadvertently see your message. A simple query like, “free to chat?” or something pre-determined by you and the tipster that would indicate whether it’s a good time to converse, or not, would be a better way to initiate comms after much time has gone by.

**Q – I hear that special jargon is sometimes used in text messages. How will we decipher it?**

**A –** Yes, texters often abbreviate words and phrases with a language of their own. Like LOL for “Laughing Out Loud” or BRB for “Be Right Back”. It’s not that difficult to pick up on and quite honestly our users are reporting a very low incidence of jargon that is difficult to interpret. We are exploring a partnership with TextaPedia which would provide a neat bound glossary for your use and even for distribution into schools, etc, promoting your text tips.

**Q – Will there be any Help available for assistance on how to use this system?**

**A –** Yes. We currently have a very brief video running at smscrimetips.com that shows the initial tip submission process from an end user’s perspective. We also have a detailed online training videos available through our TipSoft v5 Online application. In addition, we offer regularly scheduled fully interactive online training webinars for groups of users. These are conducted by our training coordinator, Detective Lisa Haber, and have been very well received. While the entire TipSoft product line is very easy to use... we like our clients to get thoroughly briefed on it to help insure they get the most use out of all of its fantastic tip management and reporting features.

**Q – What is required for us to become operational on SMS?**

**A –** Just let us know you are ready to move forward. We normally get new accounts activated with 24-48 hours depending on how many pending orders are in the queue at the time. Then we send you detailed instructions on how to install and/or access the various means to receive and reply to your text message tips.

**We hope this FAQ answers most of your questions and helps you to better understand what this new SMS text message tips initiative is all about.**

**Please direct any further questions to...**

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