

Vocal lie detector

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By NBC News Channel

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Lie detectors or polygraph tests are used to seek the truth and find the lies.

Now there's a new tool to separate fact from half truths.

It's software that tries to read your mind by reading your voice.

At first glance it looks like a basic laptop computer with a microphone off to the side, but it's being touted as the next generation of lie detector, layered voice analysis or LVA.

"I can take two words and find a deceptive statement," explained Lynn Robbins of Voice Analysis Technologies.

The new software already has fans in law enforcement.

"I would put it in a radio car and make it available to every police officer," said LA County Sheriff's Department Commander Sid Heal.

Heal is the tech guru for the Sheriff's Department, and is now testing LVA for use within the county.

"This is actually quite a bit of an improvement over anything else we've had in the past," Heal said.

The technology allows interrogators to find the areas where there is an emotional connection, regardless of the language being spoken.

Unlike a polygraph test, this doesn't require someone to be hooked up to a machine.

It only needs a voice, and that voice can come in person or from a recording.

Commander Heal says he believes LVA could be up and running in L.A. Before the end of summer.

"The thing that we gain from this is the ability of using in real time with far less training than we've had on the polygraph, far more portable and in field conditions as opposed to a laboratory setting where you're wired up to a machine," Heal said.

Commander hale believes this could allow investigators to focus on a smaller number of suspects right away, saving time and money.

LVA is currently being used all over the world, including airports in Russia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and here in the U.S.

But is it a threat to your privacy?

"It's being used for pre-employment screen, but we always let the person know that they're being interviewed and that it's going to be analyzed. It's the same as with the insurance companies. When the insurance companies use it, they let the person know that they're voice is being recorded for further analysis. This is a very serious tool that should be used by law enforcement, should be used in military applications, intelligence communities, fraud, places where that intent to deceit is going to do harm," Robbins said.

Attorneys say there is no doubt the LVA will be challenged in court.

In the meantime, there is an Employee Polygraph Protection Act which prohibits most companies from using this kind of tool.

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