

**FRIDAY**

Feb. 28, 1986  
Waco, Texas



Staff photo — Rod Aydelotte

County Court Administrator Cathy Edwards compares the printouts with the information on the computer to determine if there has been any tampering with court records

# McLennan verifies computer records

By **PAUL CARR**  
Tribune-Herald staff writer

McLennan County Court-at-Law Administrator Cathy Edwards is reviewing 2,500 misdemeanor criminal records that may have been tampered with in a weekend courthouse break-in.

The court administrator's office is on the second floor of the McLennan County Courthouse and houses a computer record-keeping system of the dockets for the two county courts-at-law.

The office was locked over the weekend and the computer disks holding court records were in a locked file cabinet with the key hidden elsewhere in the office, Mrs. Edwards said.

On Monday morning, a clerk found the key in the lock of the file cabinet. Several disks had been rearranged, she said.

Those disks contain information on about 2,500 current cases, including ones that have been filed but have not come to trial, and those

Please see **McLENNAN**, Page 9A

# McLennan checks computer records

## □ From Page 1A

of people arrested but not charged by the district attorney's office, she said.

The courts use the information to set cases for hearings before one of the two court-at-law judges, Mrs. Edwards said. If a case is deleted from the court's records, it would not be set for a hearing and never come to trial.

The county courts-at-law handle state misdemeanors, including driving while intoxicated, terroristic threat, unlawfully carrying a weapon, possession of small quantities of marijuana, minor thefts,

criminal trespass, criminal mischief, assault, reckless conduct, resisting arrest, driving while license suspended and making alcohol available to a minor.

There was no sign of forced entry, she said. She suspects the culprit either had a key or was let in by someone else.

Ironically, court officials had been warned, said Judge David Hodges of County Court-at-Law Number 1, prompting Mrs. Edwards and her staff to lock up the disks and hide the key.

"The ladies established this procedure several months ago because we had heard that our office

might be broken into," Hodges said. Although they would not reveal the source of their information, Mrs. Edwards said the source was "very reliable."

"We were not told who it might be," Hodges said. "We were just told that we would be broken into and to protect our records."

Mrs. Edwards said she has printouts of all the information on the disks, and that no information was actually lost. However, it will take a word-by-word review of each case to check for tampering, she said.

Because of the heavy current case load, Mrs. Edwards said, she

has been able to review only 30 of the 2,500 cases.

Whoever broke into the office had to have computer knowledge to find specific information on the disks, she said.

The disks she suspects have been tampered with are being dusted by the Waco Police Department for fingerprints, she said. Duplicate disks are being used to maintain current court business.

Police spokesman Bud Thurman said the police department is investigating the matter as a "possible" break-in, because there were no signs of forced entry and nothing was taken.