



ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Update on Sheriff's Department enhanced homeless outreach

SANTA ANA, Ca. (Oct. 26, 2017) – After seven weeks of an enhanced enforcement presence along the Santa Ana Riverbed and in County flood control channels, the Orange County Sheriff's Department, along with partner law enforcement agencies from Anaheim, Orange, Santa Ana and Fountain Valley, has made 180 arrests and, in concert with other agencies and organizations, offered services and resources to hundreds.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department on Sept. 6 increased efforts along the riverbed, and on Sept. 16 launched an enhanced deployment to target the criminal element proliferating in homeless encampments, while continuing to offer services and resources for those living along the riverbed.

The Santa Ana riverbed population fluctuates on a daily basis with more than 400 people living in the area on any given day, according to the most recent count.

Members of the department's Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) have made 1,093 contacts and offered a variety of resources to the individuals encamped in the area. Deputies, in some cases, made multiple contacts with the same individual in an attempt to secure services.

Of the more than 1,000 contacts made by the Sheriff's Department, 910 refused help from law enforcement.

Since Sept. 6, deputies have made 180 arrests for a variety of crimes including robbery, domestic violence, sex offenders violating the terms of their probation, and multiple parolees at-large.

The Sheriff's Department also continues to field reports about other criminal activity including human trafficking, sexual assault, and an auto theft ring. Deputies actively are looking into these claims.

Beyond observed and reported criminal behavior, deputies also have reported multiple safety concerns including hypodermic needles littered along the bike path, unsafe use of propane tanks and generators, and discarded narcotics.

"After seven weeks of sustained operations, our Homeless Outreach Team has observed significant threats to the homeless and surrounding communities," said Undersheriff Don Barnes. "Although outreach is an important aspect of our efforts, a vast majority of the population we contact is resistant to the services we are



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offering. The criminal element that remains exploits other individuals experiencing homelessness, victimizes nearby residents and threatens recreational users of the riverbed trail.”

The department in November 2016 founded the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) and established collaborative partnerships with law enforcement, county agencies, and nonprofit organizations, including City Net and the Orange County Health Care Agency, to address the complex issues along the riverbed.

While continuing to offer a helping hand to those in need by connecting them with the appropriate resources and transitioning them out of the riverbed, the Sheriff's Department's top priority is safety.

“Law enforcement has a responsibility to address and mitigate public safety threats, and we are committed to eliminating the danger that exists along the riverbed,” Barnes said.

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