



**SHANNON D. DICUS**  
SHERIFF-CORONER

# **SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY SHERIFF SHANNON DICUS**

## **MID-TERM REPORT**

October 2024

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**PREPARED BY:**

Office of the Sheriff  
San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department





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## WELCOME FROM SHERIFF DICUS

Since my appointment as Sheriff-Coroner in July 2021 and following my election in June 2022, I have remained committed to keeping the residents of San Bernardino County informed on the initiatives we have undertaken to enhance their Sheriff's Department. With strong support from the County Board of Supervisors, the County Executive Office, and the dedicated men and women of our department, we have launched several transformative projects aimed at improving public safety, strengthening community relationships, and modernizing our capabilities.



When I first conducted [my interview](#) with the Board of Supervisors and throughout my campaign for Sheriff, I outlined several key priorities for the department:

Supporting the men and women in the Sheriff's Department – both sworn and professional staff.

- Bolstering the morale in the department
- Implementation of body-worn cameras.
- Increased community engagement and accessibility with organizations of all creeds, political affiliations, and viewpoints and attempted to achieve equity in all facets.
- Working with the Board of Supervisors to tackle quality of life issues our residents face, including increased violent crime, homelessness and mental health, illicit marijuana cultivation, and OHV enforcement and education.
- Supporting and expanding the Concealed Weapons Permit program
- Utilize how the Sheriff's Department can contribute to the [countywide vision](#) – which envisions a complete county that capitalizes on the diversity of its people, geography,



and economy to create a broad range of choices for its residents in how they live, work, and play.

- Modernize our Deputy Sheriffs' tools for patrol, corrections, and specialized assignments.
- Enhancing our customer service and how we can utilize technology to better serve the community

Each of these priorities represents a commitment to ensuring that our department remains responsive, effective, and adaptive to the evolving needs of the community. Supporting our staff, both sworn and professional, remains at the core of our efforts. We have made significant strides in bolstering morale by enhancing training, improving communication across ranks, and fostering a work environment that prioritizes both safety and professional development.

The implementation of body-worn cameras was a crucial step toward modernizing the department. This initiative strengthens trust with the public while providing deputies with a valuable tool for documenting interactions and ensuring integrity in every encounter. The body-worn camera program is part of a broader commitment to equipping our deputies with the modern tools they need to meet the demands of modern policing.

Community engagement has been central to my administration's efforts. We have expanded outreach to all county areas, ensuring that residents of different creeds, political affiliations, and viewpoints feel heard and represented. Including bolstering our community information exchange programs as well as implementing the NextGen committee for the younger generation of San Bernardino County. We strive for equity in our services, seeking to address the unique challenges faced by diverse communities while maintaining a clear focus on public safety.

In partnership with the Board of Supervisors, we continue to tackle pressing quality-of-life issues such as increasing violent crime, homelessness, and the mental health crisis, along



with the proliferation of illicit marijuana cultivation. Our approach is comprehensive, blending enforcement with prevention and support services to address these challenges holistically. Additionally, we have ramped up Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) enforcement and education to protect the safety of our residents and preserve the natural beauty of our county.

The Concealed Weapons Permit program has been expanded to meet increased demand, while maintaining rigorous standards that ensure public safety. This expansion reflects our commitment to supporting residents' rights while maintaining a focus on responsible gun ownership and usage.

Our department also plays a key role in advancing the countywide vision, which emphasizes a dynamic, diverse community where residents have the freedom to shape their lifestyles. We are working closely with other county departments to ensure that our law enforcement strategies align with this vision, contributing to a vibrant and thriving San Bernardino County.

Finally, modernization is a constant priority. We have invested in upgrading the tools and technologies our deputies use, both in patrol and in specialized units. These improvements not only enhance safety but also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations, allowing us to better serve the public.

Across the Inland Empire and the State of California, we have seen a troubling rise in violent crime, including assaults on both civilians and law enforcement, as well as the proliferation of unserialized ghost guns by prohibited persons. These challenges demand proactive, multifaceted responses. Building on the strong foundation laid by former Sheriff John McMahon and his predecessors, my administration has implemented new strategies to address these threats head-on, ensuring the continued safety of our neighborhoods.



In the post-COVID environment, where law enforcement faces intensified media scrutiny, my stance has been clear: experience matters. Our deputies face complex, high-pressure situations every day, and I remain steadfast in my commitment to supporting them. It is my duty to ensure that they have the tools, training, and confidence to make the best decisions in service of public safety, and when they act in the community's interest, I will always stand in front of them.

We have taken significant steps to grow with the needs of our expanding county. This includes the creation of new bureaus such as the Transit Division, which oversees law enforcement services for public transit agencies like Metrolink and Victor Valley Transit Authority, and the Customer Service Unit, which offers residents the ability to start their police reports over the phone for incidents such as property crime. These initiatives reflect our commitment to improving accessibility and responsiveness for the public.

Establishing the Community Service and Reentry Division (CSRSD) is a key accomplishment. CSRSD represents a consolidation of various service-oriented units under one unified command, streamlining our outreach to vulnerable populations, including individuals reentering society after incarceration, those struggling with homelessness, and residents facing untreated mental illness. By partnering with county agencies such as Behavioral Health, Public Health, and community organizations, CSRSD provides comprehensive rehabilitation, education, and support services.

At the heart of effective policing is trust between law enforcement and the community. My administration is committed to maintaining that trust through consistent, transparent engagement. We believe in a relationship-based approach to policing, where communication and cooperation are key to long-term success.

As we mark this milestone in the middle of my first term, as Sheriff I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the residents of San Bernardino County. The accomplishments



outlined in this report reflect our department's unwavering dedication to public safety, community engagement, and professionalism. There is more work to be done, and I look forward to leading the Sheriff's Department with integrity, public trust, and a firm commitment to the people we serve.

Thank you for your continued trust and support,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shannon Dicus".

Shannon Dicus

Sheriff-Coroner, San Bernardino County





## SECTION 1: UNDERSHERIFF RICK BESSINGER

The economic landscape has presented significant challenges and opportunities for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department in recent years. Statewide and local economic trends directly impact our operations, including our ability to collaborate with local police departments and state and federal agencies. As we continue to manage public safety, it is critical that we remain adaptable to the fluctuations in key revenue sources, such as Proposition 172 funds and Assembly Bill 109 allocations. The fiscal outlook demands a balanced approach to ensure that we maintain operational effectiveness despite changing economic conditions.

In addition to these financial pressures, inflation and rising operational costs continue to strain our resources. Managing public safety in San Bernardino County requires effective resource allocation and strategic planning to safeguard future funding. We must stay ahead of these economic shifts by closely monitoring funding streams and adjusting our approach



to budget management. This ensures that we can continue to deliver essential services without compromising the safety and well-being of our community.

## **Economic Environment Overview**

Since 2021, California and San Bernardino County have experienced several economic challenges and shifts that impact the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department as well as our partner agencies, whether that's our municipal police departments or our state and federal partners that we work with on crime suppression. To fully understand the fiscal outlook, we must consider the broad economic trends in California, local developments in San Bernardino County, and specific revenue sources such as Proposition 172 funds, AB 109 funds, and state and federal pass-through funding.

### Statewide and Local Economic Trends

California's economy saw a significant recovery following the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and early 2021. Employment numbers have rebounded, particularly in the hospitality, entertainment, and general services sectors. By mid-2021, many regions saw a return to near pre-pandemic levels. However, inflation and supply chain issues continue to linger today and have a major impact on the Sheriff's Department's budget.

Inflation has become a prominent issue, peaking at 8% in 2022. The Federal Reserve's rate hikes to curb inflation have affected the housing market and consumer spending. This inflationary environment has driven up operational costs for public services, including law enforcement.

California experienced budget surpluses in 2021 and 2022 due to a combination of the federal pandemic and higher-than-expected tax revenue, heavily based on the Silicon Valley Initial Public Offering (IPO) market, which impacts local revenues, including sales and property tax collections, which then has a downstream effect on county budgets, and therefore the Sheriff's Department budget. However, in 2023, the state faced a projected



\$22.5 billion budget deficit as revenues from capital gains and income taxes declined, especially in technology and other high-income, stock-market-based sectors. The state's financial swings will eventually impact funding allocations for counties.

### San Bernardino County Economic Specifics

San Bernardino County has experienced steady employment growth since 2021, particularly in logistics and warehousing, due to its proximity to major shipping routes. However, rising inflation and housing costs strained household budgets, potentially increasing demand for public services and law enforcement responses.

A noticeable rise in homelessness and mental health challenges within the county has placed additional demands on the Sheriff's Department. Addressing these social issues requires more than basic law enforcement; it requires coordinated efforts that involve social services, healthcare, and public safety. We are working with our county partners and Board of Supervisors to move forward with bolstering our social safety programs.

### Key Funding Sources

Proposition 172, passed in 1993, mandates a half-cent sales tax for public safety services, including law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services. San Bernardino County receives some funds to support public safety, including the Sheriff's Department.

Since 2021, inflation and higher consumer spending have driven up sales tax revenues, benefiting Prop 172 funds. However, with inflation stabilizing and consumer spending patterns shifting in 2023-2024, future sales tax revenue growth may slow. Any decrease in these revenues directly impacts the SBSD's ability to maintain staffing, equipment, and operations, as a large portion of the budget depends on Prop 172 allocations.



Even with higher Prop 172 revenues from 2021-2022, rising operational costs (fuel, equipment, personnel) due to inflation have squeezed the department's budget, requiring careful resource management.

### Assembly Bill 109

Assembly Bill 109 was introduced in 2011 to reduce overcrowding in state prisons by shifting the responsibility of certain low-level offenders to county jails and probation. Counties receive funding from the state to manage this population, impacting SBSD's operations.

Since 2021, San Bernardino County has faced evolving jail population pressures as the state continues to shift responsibilities to local jurisdictions. This increase strains jail facilities and resources, requiring more personnel and support services, which adds to budget pressures. In addition, many of the medical and mental health services that is offered by the State of California, have made their way down as unfunded mandates to county jails.

AB 109 funding has fluctuated based on the state's financial condition. With California's budget deficit in 2023, there's been concern that future AB 109 allocations could be reduced or grow at a slower pace, forcing the Sheriff's Department to cover more costs out of the county's general fund.

### State and Federal Pass Throughs

These funds include allocations from the state for specific law enforcement programs, training, and public safety initiatives. In 2021 and 2022, these funds saw temporary increases due to federal pandemic relief packages like the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). However, as federal stimulus wanes and California faces tighter budget conditions, we may see a reduction in future allocations.



Federal funding streams include grants for counterterrorism, drug enforcement, and community policing initiatives. These funds are often competitive and dependent on the federal budget. In the current federal fiscal climate, law enforcement grants are increasingly competitive, and any cuts at the federal level could affect SBSD's ability to fund special initiatives.

### Conclusion

In navigating the ongoing economic challenges and shifts, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department must remain adaptable and strategic in its fiscal planning. California's fluctuating economic conditions, local developments within the county, and the unpredictability of key revenue sources such as Proposition 172, AB 109, and federal pass-through funding all directly impact the department's operations.

While the department has benefitted from past surpluses and temporary federal relief measures, rising inflation and operational costs have placed considerable pressure on the budget. As state and federal funding sources may fluctuate in the coming years, the Sheriff's Department must continue to exercise prudent financial management to ensure that critical public safety services are maintained without disruption.

Looking ahead, the department will need to closely monitor changes in economic conditions, particularly in inflationary impacts and shifts in state and federal funding allocations. Maintaining a flexible and responsive fiscal strategy will be essential to safeguarding public safety and addressing the evolving needs of the community, especially in areas such as homelessness, mental health, and jail management.

### **Sheriff's Department Budget**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff Department's 2024-25 budget exceeds \$1 billion across all funding sources, supporting a total workforce of 4,429 personnel. This represents a notable increase of \$216 million and 348 additional positions compared to the 2021-22



budget when Sheriff Dicus assumed office. The budgetary expansion is driven by several key revenue streams, including \$50 million in additional tax revenue, primarily from Proposition 172, \$39 million from Public Safety Realignment (AB 109) funding, \$32.5 million in increased law enforcement contract city contributions, and nearly \$90 million in additional Net County Cost.

This funding directly supports the Sheriff's Department's objectives, which focus on ensuring San Bernardino County residents' safety, health, and social service needs. These priorities align with the department's long-standing commitment to public safety and community well-being.

## **Adding Additional Deputy Sheriffs**

Since the 2021-22 fiscal year, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has significantly added to its personnel and resources to improve overall operations, response times, and community services due to the forward-thinking and support from the County Board of Supervisors. The department has added 169 positions within the Sheriff's Operations budget, enhancing both sworn and professional staff to bolster training, supervision, and service delivery across various units.

### Key Operational Enhancements

The department has added a variety of high-level positions and teams to meet growing operational demands and legislative changes. This includes an Assistant Sheriff in the Office of the Sheriff to address concerns from the Prison Law Office (PLO) and provide focused support to the Detentions and Corrections Bureau. In addition, a Deputy Chief was introduced to the Sheriff's Executive Staff for improved operational oversight and long term succession planning.

To align with new legislative mandates (Senate Bill 1421 and Senate Bill 2), the department created a Professional Standards Unit, adding 12 positions and restructuring the Internal



Affairs Division to ensure consistency and reduce the administrative load on field stations. Eleven additional positions were established to form a body-worn camera (BWC) team to facilitate the implementation of BWCs.

The Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (HOPE) team expanded into the High Desert, adding two deputies to address the increasingly complex homeless crisis. Similarly, new positions were created to improve patrol services, including three deputies for Lytle Creek and Rosena Ranch to enhance response times and 18 unincorporated patrol deputies distributed across Victor Valley, Morongo, and Central stations. These new deputy positions also assist our surrounding jurisdictions and municipalities during busy call volume.

#### Strengthening Patrol and Investigative Services

Patrol operations received further support from new deputies deployed to Twin Peaks, Big Bear, and Fontana. Additionally, the department added ten Detective/Corporal positions, which will assist sergeants with patrol calls, enhance training, reduce liability, and improve customer service in the field.

A second Marijuana Enforcement Team was also created, supported by ten additional positions, to respond to the rise in illegal cannabis cultivation. A new Customer Service Unit was formed with the addition of eight professional staff and one sergeant to ensure timely and efficient responses to service calls and assist with deputy reporting.

The Coroner's Office also received twelve new staff members to improve efficiency, facilitate the completion of autopsies, and ensure timely production of critical autopsy reports. Four positions were added to the Public Administrator's Office to improve operations, lead training initiatives, and support succession planning efforts.

The department hired professional staff managers for the Technical Services Division (TSD) and the Bureau of Administration (BofA) to enhance administrative and technical



capabilities. TSD received seven new positions to improve technological efficiency and develop a cybersecurity team, while two new staff members were added to BofA to support budgetary oversight and audit functions.

#### Specialized Units and Emergency Support

The Crimes Against Children unit saw the addition of two detectives to manage increasing caseloads. The Emergency Operations Division was strengthened by adding two flight deputies to improve aerial support for desert patrols, allowing ground units to follow vehicle pursuits at a safer distance. Two new aviation mechanics were also added to enhance aircraft maintenance efficiency and reduce downtime.

The department's range facilities benefitted from adding two deputies to improve the student-to-instructor ratio, reduce lead exposure as mandated by Cal OSHA, and comply with First Responder Training requirements outlined in Assembly Bill 1598.

Efforts to enhance recruitment and retention were also supported with six new positions, including a specialized recruiter for the Employee Resources Division. A crime analyst was added to the Jail Intelligence Team to support major investigations, track emerging jail crime trends, and monitor disruptive groups.

#### Detentions and Corrections Bureau Expansion

To accommodate the growing needs of the High Desert Detention Center (HDDC) and improve medical and mental health services for inmates, the Detentions and Corrections Bureau added 148 new positions. These included ten Medical Transport Deputies to ensure that facility security is maintained during inmate transports, 18 Deputies at the West Valley Detention Center (WVDC) to comply with the Prison Law Office (PLO) consent decree remedial plan, and 78 positions at HDDC to expand services, including medical and mental health treatment programs.





The Community Service and Reentry Division (CSRSD) added six sworn positions to provide law enforcement support for community-based operations. These roles focus on engaging with program participants, conducting home visits, and assisting with public outreach and criminal investigations related to program non-compliance.

### Support for Contact Cities

A contract city refers to a municipality that does not have its own independent police department but instead contracts with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services. In this arrangement, the Sheriff's Department provides deputy sheriffs, detectives, and other law enforcement services to the city, while the city pays for these services through a negotiated contract. This allows cities to benefit from professional law enforcement without the costs and administrative burden of maintaining an independent police force.

In recent years, the Sheriff's Department has expanded its support for these contract cities to meet increasing public safety demands. As part of this effort, 31 new positions have been added across various contract cities. These positions provide additional law enforcement personnel to enhance patrol services, improve response times, and ensure that contract cities receive the necessary resources to maintain public safety. This expansion demonstrates the department's ongoing commitment to the contract cities it serves, ensuring that they receive high-quality, responsive law enforcement services tailored to their specific needs.

### **Capital Improvement Projects**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is currently engaged in a series of significant capital improvement projects aimed at modernizing its infrastructure, expanding operational capacity, and enhancing public safety services throughout the county. These projects reflect the department's ongoing commitment to ensuring that its facilities and resources are fully equipped to meet the evolving needs of the communities it serves. As the



county continues to grow, these improvements will provide better working environments for deputies and staff and ensure that the department can maintain its high service delivery standards in urban and rural areas. Each of these projects addresses specific operational needs, from advanced training facilities to the construction of new stations in underserved areas, thereby reinforcing the department's ability to respond effectively to various public safety challenges.

The SID Orange & Blue Lab remodel project is focused on upgrading the department's Scientific Investigations Division (SID) laboratory facilities. This remodel will enhance the forensic capabilities of the department, ensuring that cutting-edge technology is available to process and analyze evidence more efficiently.

A major acquisition involves purchasing a building and surrounding acreage for the new Victor Valley Station. This new station will expand the department's presence in the Victor Valley area, providing improved facilities for deputies and better service to the surrounding communities. In addition, it will allow residents to access many of the services offered at the Sheriff's Headquarters in San Bernardino in the High Desert and eliminate the need for residents and employees to spend hours on the Cajon Pass.

The Colorado River Station remodel project is set to modernize the department's facilities along the Colorado River, ensuring that deputies have access to upgraded infrastructure as they serve this unique geographic area, which requires specific operational needs.

Similarly, the Big Bear Station remodel project is aimed at improving the department's facility in Big Bear, a key location that deals with a mix of both routine law enforcement and seasonal population surges due to tourism.



The Range Office remodel project is designed to enhance the department's firing range facilities. This project will improve the working conditions for staff, increase training capabilities, and ensure compliance with safety and environmental standards.

The Scenario Village project department is upgrading its training facilities. Scenario Village is used for real-world, tactical training exercises. This project will ensure the department's personnel can train under conditions that simulate the challenges they face in the field.

The construction of the Specialized Operations Complex is also a significant capital project. The facility will provide a centralized location for specialized units, ensuring these teams have the infrastructure and space needed to perform their critical functions.

The EVOC asphalt and track lighting project focuses on improving the Emergency Vehicle Operations Center (EVOC), which is a critical training facility for vehicle handling skills. The upgrades to the asphalt and lighting will enhance safety and operational efficiency during training exercises, particularly those conducted during nighttime hours.

Lastly, the Kessler Park sub-station will provide additional law enforcement presence in a key area, improving the department's ability to respond quickly to incidents and providing a visible public safety presence in the community.

These capital improvement projects are vital to modernizing the department's infrastructure and expanding its operational capacity to meet the needs of San Bernardino County's growing and diverse population. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department will continue to work with the Board of Supervisors and the County Administration to identify and prioritize future capital improvement projects.



## Partnerships

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has entered a series of key Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with various organizations to enhance its operational capabilities and public safety efforts.

The department has partnered with the City of Los Angeles Harbor Department to utilize its Regional Maritime Law Enforcement Training Center. This partnership aims to develop advanced training strategies to safeguard America's waterways and ports. Additionally, the department has collaborated with the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District to staff two firefighter paramedics for the Emergency Operations Division-Aviation Unit. These paramedics provide critical emergency medical services during rescue helicopter missions.

To address child exploitation and human trafficking, the Sheriff's Department joined forces with the FBI by participating in the Inland Regional Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force (IRCEHTTF). This initiative is part of a broader effort to combat serious crimes affecting vulnerable populations.

On the communications front, the department has entered into a five-year agreement with the Interagency Communications Interoperability (ICI) Systems Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to ensure continued access to its radio communications network, essential for seamless interagency cooperation during emergencies and routine operations.

The department established a contract for mutual autopsy services in a unique partnership with the Riverside County Sheriff-Coroner. This agreement aims to eliminate any potential conflict of interest in autopsies conducted following lethal force encounters or in-custody deaths.



The department has also signed an MOU with the FBI for its participation in the Inland Violent Crime Suppression Task Force (IVCSTF), focusing on reducing violent crime across the region.

Furthermore, the Sheriff's Department partnered with Inland Empire Health Plan to create a housing and social services referral system for unsheltered individuals. These services are targeted at individuals who are current or potential Inland Empire Health Plan members, addressing both health and housing needs.

Lastly, in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District, the department established an agreement to support the Community Outreach and Support Team (COAST) program. This program provides office space, a firefighter Emergency Medical Technician, and an assigned therapy canine to help address the community's mental health and outreach needs.

These partnerships reflect the department's commitment to enhancing public safety, improving community health, and expanding its operational reach through collaboration with local, state, and federal entities.

## Employee Wellness

The Wellness and Resilience Unit was created as a vital resource for all San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department members—our employees, retirees, volunteers, and their families. We recognize the unique pressures faced by our personnel, and the goal of this unit is to provide support during times of need or crisis. Whether following a critical incident or through proactive measures, we offer tools and services designed to help our people remain resilient throughout their careers and into retirement.

The Wellness and Resilience Unit offers various services, including counseling, peer support, financial assistance, financial training, physical health and nutrition guidance, and retirement planning. By coordinating closely with the Sheriff's Employees Assistance Team



(SEAT)—a non-profit organization established to support department members facing major illnesses, accidents, and unexpected emergencies—the unit is well-equipped to address the multifaceted challenges our personnel may encounter.

The Wellness and Resilience Unit is available around the clock 24/7, ensuring immediate response to critical incidents. Over the past two years alone, unit members have responded to over 40 critical incidents annually, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to providing support when it's needed most. In such cases, the unit works closely with The Counseling Team International (TCTI), a contracted organization whose staff understands the unique challenges faced by first responders. TCTI provides specialized, competent care to our employees and their families, ensuring that the right help is available during those crucial moments.

Beyond its responsive efforts, the Wellness and Resilience Unit takes a proactive approach to employee health and well-being. Research has made it clear that the daily trauma experienced by first responders can affect every aspect of their lives. Just as importantly, there are proven methods to combat the long-term effects of this trauma. Over the past two years, the unit has facilitated more than 2,500 hours of training in areas like mental health, financial management, nutrition, and fitness. We offer these resources to all department members, starting as early as the academy, where recruits and their families are introduced to the importance of mental wellness and resilience. This early intervention is designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge to maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout their careers.

One of the most effective tools we've provided to our personnel is the Cordico wellness app, a comprehensive platform offering one-touch access to national hotlines, counseling services, self-assessments, peer support, and training. The app also connects users to the department's 42-member peer support team, which is composed of both safety and professional staff. These trained team members volunteer their time to offer confidential



peer-level support and guidance to anyone in need. The peer support program has become a trusted resource within our department, with members logging 372 hours of assistance in the past year alone.

Recognizing that first responders may face challenges at any stage of their careers, the Wellness and Resilience Unit remains committed to proactive, continuous improvement. We partner with public safety agencies and wellness professionals across the state and nation to identify the most effective programs and ensure our staff have access to the best available resources. To that end, we are in the process of adding 31 new volunteer peer support members to expand our outreach. In the coming years, we plan to grow the Wellness and Resilience Unit with additional full-time staff to ensure that we remain at the forefront of employee wellness.

### **Expansion of Internal Affairs**

As legislative changes have significantly reshaped administrative investigation processes, it became clear the Sheriff's Department's internal affairs procedures needed an overhaul. Recognizing our previous system hindered timely corrective actions and communication with employees, we took decisive steps to modernize our approach. Mandates from the State of California, including Senate Bill 1421, Senate Bill 16, and Senate Bill 2, as well as updated administrative requirements from the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), prompted this shift.

For example, SB 2 requires law enforcement agencies throughout the state to report cases involving excessive force, failure to intervene in such incidents, sexual misconduct with the public, dishonesty related to investigations, participation in law enforcement gangs, racial or identity profiling, unlawful arrests and searches, and employee separations. These expanded reporting requirements highlighted the need for a more streamlined and effective internal affairs process that could meet the expectations of both the public and the state.



In response, we completely restructured our Internal Affairs Division, adopting an investigative methodology modeled after our homicide unit. This new, team-based approach not only enhances accountability and oversight but also fosters flexibility and thoroughness by eliminating procedural silos that previously slowed investigations. With this model, we've ensured each investigation receives the same level of rigor as our highest-priority cases.

The revamped Internal Affairs Division is now structured with a lieutenant, five sergeants and four dedicated teams, each responsible for specific operational areas: the Desert Patrol Region, the Valley Patrol Region, Corrections, and all other department functions. This restructuring has significantly reduced individual caseloads by distributing work more efficiently across the teams. By improving oversight and accountability, we've created a system that is not only more efficient internally but also more transparent to the public.

Beyond structural improvements, we've invested in cutting-edge technology and enhanced training to support our internal affairs investigators. The introduction of an advanced case management system allows for real-time tracking of investigations, preventing unnecessary delays and ensuring cases are handled efficiently from start to finish. Our investigators are also receiving specialized training that equips them to handle the increasingly complex nature of today's cases, from navigating new state mandates to applying the latest investigative techniques.

These enhancements underscore our commitment to both internal and external accountability. By improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our internal affairs investigations, we not only strengthen our department's operations but also build greater trust within the community. Our efforts reflect a broader dedication to continuous improvement, ensuring that we meet the highest standards of integrity, and professionalism.





## Reorganization of Command Staff

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has recently undergone significant reorganization in its executive leadership to better meet the challenges of modern law enforcement and public safety. This restructuring includes key leadership transitions, and the creation of new positions aimed at improving operational efficiency. These changes are designed to mirror successful organizational models in other large law enforcement agencies, ensuring that the department is well-positioned to address the diverse needs of the county.

In August 2024, Sheriff Dicus appointed me as Undersheriff. It is the Sheriff's expectation I will lead the department's operations with a focus on modernizing public safety strategies and addressing the increasingly complex needs of the county.

The department has also added an additional Assistant Sheriff position, restructuring its executive team to enhance oversight across its key areas of responsibility. This new structure now divides responsibilities among three Assistant Sheriffs. The first Assistant Sheriff is responsible for overseeing the department's corrections and courts bureau, including managing county jails and contracted court security. This role is particularly important as the department deals with the growing complexities of corrections, such as the need for enhanced mental health services and medical care for inmates.

The second Assistant Sheriff focuses on patrol operations. This role involves overseeing law enforcement officers in the field, ensuring the community's safety through responsive and efficient policing. Patrol operations are critical to public safety, and this specialized oversight helps the department address the evolving demands of law enforcement in a large and diverse county.

The third Assistant Sheriff is tasked with overseeing the support functions of the department. This role is essential in leading efforts on hiring and recruitment, scientific investigations, the training center, information services, and the coroners' office. By dividing responsibilities among these



three roles, the department can provide more focused leadership across its core functions, improving both efficiency and accountability.

In addition to these structural changes, the department has created a new deputy chief position to specifically address support operations within the corrections division, including medical, mental health, and culinary. The increasing complexity of providing healthcare services to the incarcerated population, including managing mental health concerns and substance abuse issues, necessitated the creation of this role. The new deputy chief is responsible for ensuring that the department maintains high standards of medical care within its correctional facilities, working closely with medical professionals and correctional staff to meet the health needs of inmates. This addition underscores the department's commitment to addressing the unique challenges of corrections and court services in today's environment.

These changes reflect our commitment to enhancing the operational capacity and efficiency of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. By reorganizing its leadership structure, the department is better positioned to handle the complex and evolving demands of public safety, corrections, and administrative management. Adding the new Assistant Sheriff and Deputy Chief roles will allow for a more specialized focus in critical areas, ensuring that the department continues to provide high-quality services to the residents of San Bernardino County.



## SECTION 2: CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND COUNTYWIDE ENFORCEMENT

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has been no stranger to critical incidents and countywide operations involving our law enforcement partners. This section will discuss our major challenges, beginning with the 2023 information technology network disruption and continuing through our crime suppression efforts, including Operation Hammer Strike and Operation Consequences. We will also highlight Operation Shelter Me, which addresses homelessness and mental health concerns, and Operation Dust Devil, which focuses on educating the public about illegal off-highway vehicle activities and protecting our environment.

In addition to these initiatives, San Bernardino County has faced several natural disasters, including a historic blizzard, numerous wildfires, and destructive floods. The department has been at the forefront of response efforts to safeguard residents and maintain order in these trying times. An overview of these critical operations and how we've responded to these environmental challenges can be found in this section.



## 2023 Sheriff's Network Disruption

In April 2023, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department experienced a significant network disruption that impacted our operations. While this was an immensely challenging period, our Technical Services Division (TSD) demonstrated remarkable resilience, turning the disruption into an opportunity to rebuild stronger than before. Through a coordinated and comprehensive response, we implemented a series of Information Technology (IT) best practices that not only restored our systems but also fortified them against future incidents.

A critical component of our recovery has been enhancing our threat detection and response capabilities. We've implemented proactive measures to identify potential risks before they escalate, utilizing real-time monitoring systems that allow us to detect and address vulnerabilities as they arise. TSD has adopted industry-leading practices, including the use of intrusion detection systems (IDS) and continuous penetration testing. These tools help us evaluate and improve our security infrastructure, ensuring we remain ahead of potential threats. Regular vulnerability scanning has become an integral part of our security process, allowing us to maintain a strong defense against both internal and external risks.

One of the key advancements has been the implementation of multi-factor authentication across all levels of our IT infrastructure. This additional layer of security significantly reduces the likelihood of unauthorized access, even in the event of compromised login credentials. By requiring users to verify their identity through multiple forms of authentication, we've created a more robust defense against unauthorized intrusions.

We rely on Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR) technology to further streamline our security processes. This system allows us to automate responses to common threats, ensuring faster reaction times and reducing the need for manual intervention. Automating these processes ensures consistency in our threat response while freeing up our cybersecurity teams to focus on more complex and evolving challenges. Additionally, TSD



has established a Security Operations Center (SOC) equipped with a video wall that visually monitors incoming threat notifications, anomalous activity, and alerts in real-time.

Our approach to IT data governance has also been significantly enhanced. We've implemented stronger controls over data access, ensuring sensitive information is only available to authorized personnel. These efforts have been crucial in safeguarding data integrity and maintaining compliance with relevant regulations. TSD has also upgraded data protection measures, including the addition of immutable backups, end-to-end encryption, and malware detection within our backup environments and file servers. Multiple email security features have been enabled to protect against phishing, malware, and other email-based threats, which are common entry points for network disruptions.

In addition to technical upgrades, we've placed a renewed focus on user awareness and training. We've developed a comprehensive training program that includes regular phishing campaigns designed to test staff readiness and help them identify suspicious emails and potential security threats. These exercises have been instrumental in building a culture of awareness throughout the department. Our cybersecurity training sessions now include the latest threat detection methods and safe IT practices, ensuring that every staff member has the tools and knowledge to contribute to a secure working environment.

Our recovery efforts have extended beyond internal measures to include the strengthening of external partnerships. We've deepened our relationships with key agencies such as the Joint Regional Intelligence Center (JRIC), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and neighboring law enforcement IT departments. These partnerships have been invaluable for enhancing information sharing and receiving timely intelligence on emerging threats. By collaborating with these agencies, we can leverage their resources, expertise, and real-time intelligence to ensure we avoid potential disruptions.



While the network disruption of April 2023 posed significant challenges, TSD has emerged stronger and more resilient. Our commitment to adopting IT best practices, fostering a culture of cybersecurity awareness, and strengthening our relationships with key external partners has reinforced our systems against future incidents. Through a proactive and comprehensive approach, we have not only restored operations but positioned ourselves for long-term success in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. TSD's achievements over the past months are a testament to our dedication to continuous improvement, innovation, and resilience.

### **Natural Disasters: Floods and Forest Fires**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has faced multiple natural disasters over the past two years, requiring coordinated responses from various divisions and partner agencies. These events tested our emergency preparedness and demonstrated the resilience and determination of both our personnel and the affected communities. Below are summaries of key incidents showcasing the Department's efforts in ensuring public safety during challenging times.

#### Yucaipa, Oak Glen, and Forest Falls Flood (September 2022)

In mid-September 2022, the heavy rainfall forecast from Tropical Storm Kay prompted the Sheriff's Department to issue flash flood and evacuation warnings for Oak Glen, Forest Falls, Mountain Home Village, Angelus Oaks, and Northeast Yucaipa. The Department anticipated the potential for mud and debris flow from the El Dorado and Apple Fire burn scars, which posed significant risks to these areas.

As the storm intensified beyond predictions, the Sheriff's Emergency Operations Division (EOD) issued shelter-in-place orders for Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village residents. Evacuations were ordered for Oak Glen and Northeast Yucaipa, where mud and debris began to block roads. Deputies from Yucaipa and surrounding stations were mobilized, conducting



door-to-door evacuations, manning roadblocks, and providing security at the evacuation shelter at Redlands East Valley High School.

The storm caused extensive damage, with multiple homes impacted by mudflows. In Forest Falls, a resident was reported missing after her home was destroyed by the debris flow. Search efforts, including cadaver dogs and Sheriff's teams, eventually located her body under several feet of mud. In total, eight residences and one commercial property were destroyed, while 20 additional homes sustained moderate to major damage. After the storm passed, evacuation orders were lifted, allowing residents to return home where possible.

#### Yucaipa, Oak Glen, Forest Falls, and Seven Oaks Flood (August 2023)

In August 2023, the communities of Angelus Oaks, Seven Oaks, Oak Glen, Forest Falls, and Yucaipa faced further damage from mud and debris flows after Tropical Storm Hillary hit the region. The storm dropped significant rainfall on areas still vulnerable from previous burn scars, resulting in severe flooding. Based on forecasts from the National Weather Service, the Sheriff's Yucaipa Station, in collaboration with EOD, issued evacuation warnings and orders for Seven Oaks and Forest Falls. Deputies were dispatched to these neighborhoods to ensure compliance with evacuation orders.

The storm caused the Santa Ana River to overflow, sending debris into the Seven Oaks community. After the bridge providing access to the area was destroyed, approximately 30 residents were stranded and ordered to shelter in place. Rescue efforts were delayed due to hazardous conditions, but Sheriff's Aviation was eventually able to hoist a resident with a leg injury to safety. Other residents opted to stay until floodwaters receded, and by the following Tuesday, fire crews had cleared a path for Sheriff's Aviation to evacuate more residents.

Damage was extensive in Seven Oaks, with several mobile homes destroyed, and one resident was reported missing. Search and rescue teams eventually recovered her body downstream. Other communities, including Oak Glen and Forest Falls, sustained damage to



roads, bridges, and residences due to mudflows. About 700 residents in Forest Falls were ordered to shelter in place after the road to the community was cut off. Fortunately, no injuries were reported, and access was restored the following day.

The response to the flooding involved over 100 Sheriff's personnel, specialized equipment, and aircraft. This week-long operation required coordination between multiple divisions, as well as partner agencies, to ensure the safety of residents and mitigate further damage.

#### Line and Bridge Fire Response (September 2024)

On Thursday, September 5, 2024, the Line Fire ignited near Baseline Road in Highland, quickly spreading into the San Bernardino National Forest. Despite the immediate deployment of five firefighting aircraft, the fire's rapid expansion prompted the Office of the Sheriff to activate the Department Operations Center (DOC) at Level I to manage the incident. The DOC was staffed by the Emergency Operations Division (EOD), Sheriff's Intelligence, and other command personnel. The Sheriff's Department entered Unified Command with Cal Fire, San Bernardino County Fire, and the United States Forest Service, with Cal Fire Incident Management Team 3 activated to assist in managing the incident.

As the fire intensified on Friday, September 6, evacuation warnings and orders were issued for several mountain communities, including Running Springs, Arrowbear, Green Valley Lake, Lake Arrowhead, Crestline, Twin Peaks, Northern Yucaipa, Angelus Oaks, and Seven Oaks. To support these evacuation efforts, the Department's Mobile Field Force (MFF) was deployed to supplement patrol staff while providing additional security for the evacuated areas.

Simultaneously, on Sunday, September 8, the Bridge Fire ignited in Los Angeles County and rapidly spread into San Bernardino County. This prompted evacuation orders for communities such as Mount Baldy, Northern Upland, San Antonio Heights, Wrightwood, Lone Pine, and Pinion Hills. By Tuesday, September 10, the Bridge Fire had grown to over





34,000 acres, surpassing the Line Fire in size. Unified Command was established with the United States Forest Service, Cal Fire, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, San Bernardino County Fire Department, and other agencies. Cal Fire Incident Management Team 5 was activated to assist with managing the Bridge Fire, as well.

Throughout both incidents, the Sheriff's Department utilized personnel from various specialized divisions, including Gangs, Narcotics, and the Specialized Enforcement Division (SED), to assist with evacuations and provide additional patrols. The Department also collaborated with outside agencies, receiving personnel support from the Barstow Police Department, Chino Police Department, Colton Police Department, Fontana Police Department, Montclair Police Department, Ontario Police Department, Redlands Police Department, Rialto Police Department, San Bernardino Police Department, and the Upland Police Department. Additionally, 130 personnel from the National Guard were deployed to assist in the response.

The Department's Sheriff's Aviation Unit also played a critical role, deploying a hoist-capable helicopter and rescue crew to aid in search and rescue operations. Over the course of the operation, the following personnel were deployed across both fires:

- 106 patrol deputies
- 55 specialized division personnel
- 108 Mobile Field Force personnel
- 1 Sheriff's hoist-capable helicopter with a rescue crew
- 20 officers from 10 allied agencies
- 130 National Guard personnel

In total, 424 personnel were directly involved in the emergency response, with the Office of the Sheriff overseeing coordination and resource deployment. Regular day-to-day operations were maintained with assistance from the aforementioned allied agencies.



Meanwhile, Highland Station detectives could continue their investigation into the cause of the Line Fire. Within 24 hours of the fire's ignition, detectives identified a suspect and vehicle, and an arrest was made within days of the fire's start.

In addition to these efforts, the Department's Mobile Field Force made 49 arrests for various offenses, including narcotics violations, weapons violations, and residential burglary, while patrolling evacuated areas.

On Friday, September 20, the Sheriff's Department lifted the final evacuation warnings for the Line Fire, which had burned 39,232 acres and was 57 percent contained at that time. The following day, on September 21, the remaining evacuation warnings for the Bridge Fire were lifted. By then, the Bridge Fire had consumed 54,877 acres and was 69 percent contained. In total, these two fires affected over 112,000 residents, with 87,140 under evacuation warnings and 19,631 placed under evacuation orders. While nine residential structures were destroyed and seven were damaged, there was no loss of life.

*\*At the time of this report, the Line Fire has reignited in the Seven Oaks area, and an evacuation order has been put into place. No injuries or damage to residents have been reported, and sheriff resources, including Mobile Field Force and EOD personnel, are being redeployed to the area to assist*

These incidents underscore the complexity of managing natural disasters in San Bernardino County and highlight the dedication and preparedness of the Sheriff's Department. Through coordination, technology, and collaboration with external agencies, we continue to protect our communities and respond to emergencies swiftly and effectively.



## 2023 Mountain Storm Response

From February 23, 2023, through March 15, 2023, the San Bernardino Mountains were struck by an extraordinary winter storm, categorized as a "blizzard" by the National Weather Service. This unprecedented weather event resulted in nearly 11 feet of snowfall in some areas, severely impacting the region's communities and infrastructure. The scale of the storm, combined with back-to-back snowfall, posed immense challenges for the delivery of emergency services and required a coordinated response from local, state, and federal partners.

The initial round of snowfall occurred between February 23 and February 28, bringing close to seven feet of snow to the mountains. A second wave followed from March 2 through March 4, adding an additional four feet of heavy, wet snow. These extreme conditions overwhelmed traditional response capabilities, necessitating an immediate and collaborative effort to support the affected residents.

### Incident Command and Operational Response

On February 28, San Bernardino County activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate the countywide response. Simultaneously, the Incident Management Team (IMT) was established at the Sheriff's Department's Aviation building, and a localized mountain area command post was set up at Fire Station 91 in Lake Arrowhead. The command post was staffed by personnel from the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Station alongside the San Bernardino County Fire Department. This early mobilization was critical in organizing the initial response and deploying resources to the hardest-hit areas.

As the storm worsened and the scope of the response expanded, the Incident Management Team outgrew its initial location. On March 4, the IMT relocated to the Orange Show Fairgrounds to accommodate additional personnel, equipment, and vehicles arriving from across California. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department activated its Department



Operations Center (DOC) on the same day, further strengthening the coordination of the ongoing efforts.

Throughout the incident, the Sheriff's Department maintained a constant presence at the EOC, IMT, DOC, and mountain command post. Over the course of 16 operational periods, the Department's primary mission was to preserve life and property, conduct evacuations, and ensure emergency vehicle access to isolated communities. Our personnel also provided critical support to other agencies, including utility and transportation departments, to restore essential services such as power and road access.

### Rescue and Recovery Operations

The storm's impact on the mountain communities was unprecedented. Areas such as Big Bear Lake, Big Bear City, Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, Mount Baldy, Running Springs, and Wrightwood experienced record snowfall, resulting in widespread road closures, power outages, and fuel shortages. The depth of the snow created life-threatening situations, with many homes buried under snow drifts that made escape impossible without assistance. Sheriff's personnel, along with San Bernardino County Fire, worked tirelessly to rescue residents who were trapped in their homes or stranded in their vehicles.

Over the three-week storm period, the Department responded to 269 documented rescues, including welfare checks, medical transports, and evacuations. Several residents who required immediate assistance were airlifted off the mountain by the Sheriff's Aviation Unit. Unfortunately, 12 residents passed away during the storms, with one fatality directly linked to the extreme weather due to a hit-and-run traffic collision. Despite these tragic losses, the coordinated efforts of our teams helped mitigate further casualties and provided critical relief to isolated communities.



### Challenges and Community Impact

The storm's severity and duration caught many residents off guard, resulting in significant frustrations as news reports and social media posts highlighted concerns over the perceived slow response from both public agencies and private utility companies. Comparisons were drawn to the region's last major snow event in January 1933, when seven feet of snow blanketed the area, but the 2023 storm exceeded even those historical levels, compounding the difficulties in delivering timely aid.

Many homes were surrounded by towering snow drifts, trapping residents for days without access to essential supplies. Roads were impassable for extended periods, and power outages left entire communities without heat. Despite these challenges, the Sheriff's Department remained committed to aiding wherever possible. Deputies facilitated the delivery of food and supplies, conducted welfare checks on vulnerable individuals, and assisted in clearing access routes for emergency vehicles.

### Collaborative Efforts and Conclusion

Throughout the storm, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department worked closely with local, state, and federal agencies to coordinate response efforts. Our partners included the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), San Bernardino County Public Works, San Bernardino County Fire Department, and numerous other agencies that provided critical support. These collaborations allowed us to mobilize personnel and resources on an unprecedented scale, ensuring that emergency services could reach even the most remote areas.

On June 2, 2023, the County deactivated the Emergency Operations Center, and the local state of emergency was lifted on June 27, 2023. In the aftermath of the storm, the Sheriff's Department conducted a thorough review of the response, leading to the release of our [2023 Mountain Storm Response Summary and After-Action Report](#), which outlined the successes



and lessons learned from the operation. This report is a valuable tool for improving future disaster preparedness and response efforts in the County.

Despite the extraordinary challenges posed by the storm, the dedication of our personnel and our partnerships with other agencies ensured that the region could begin the recovery process. Our ongoing commitment to serving the residents of San Bernardino County remains unwavering, and the lessons learned during this event will guide our future emergency response efforts.

### **Level of Violence Increasing Throughout the County**

In recent years, Southern California, including the Inland Empire, has experienced a significant rise in violent crime. This increase can be partly attributed to misguided legislative priorities coming from Sacramento. Key among these is California's Proposition 47, the so-called "Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act," which passed in 2014. While intended to reduce the prison population and focus resources on more serious offenders, this law has had unintended consequences impacting public safety across the state.

Proposition 47 raised the threshold for felony theft from \$450 to over \$950, reducing many theft-related crimes to misdemeanors. This has emboldened criminal activity, particularly in retail environments, where organized theft rings now operate with relative impunity. Law enforcement agencies across the state have reported a dramatic increase in retail theft, where perpetrators know that the consequences of their actions will be minimal. According to the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), theft and larceny rates increased in the years immediately following the passage of Prop 47.

Additionally, the proposition reclassified certain drug possession offenses from felonies to misdemeanors, which has contributed to the growing homelessness and mental health crises. Decriminalizing drug possession has removed a crucial intervention point for law enforcement, reducing the ability to mandate rehabilitation and treatment for those



struggling with addiction. This has been a significant factor in the rising number of individuals experiencing homelessness, who are often suffering from both substance abuse and mental health illness.

Perhaps most concerning is the reclassification of certain violent crimes as nonviolent under California statutes, which were reformed with California's Proposition 47 and Proposition 57.

### Parole Violations and At-Large Felons

Another alarming statistic is the number of felons who remain at large in our communities. According to data from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), there were 6,987 parolees at large statewide as of December 2022, with 552 of them residing in San Bernardino County alone. These individuals, who have violated the terms of their parole, often disappear into homeless encampments or live with others while avoiding arrest. The presence of nearly 7,000 unmonitored felons in our communities is a direct contributor to rising crime rates, as these individuals often revert to criminal activity.

In March 2023, our deputy sheriffs were involved in two separate lethal force encounters with parolees at large who posed direct threats to public safety. These incidents underscore the danger that unchecked parolees present, not just to law enforcement but to the community at large.

### Mental Health Crisis and Violent Crime

Compounding the rise in crime is the mental health crisis that continues to overwhelm law enforcement. Calls for service involving mentally ill individuals have skyrocketed in recent years, and the resources available to address these cases are often insufficient. From January 2020 to the spring of 2023, our department received 16,929 calls related to mental health crises. Many of these calls stem from incidents involving individuals experiencing



homelessness, who are often caught in a cycle of untreated mental illness, substance abuse, and crime.

While there is some hope for change at the State Capitol, as lawmakers begin to recognize the growing crisis, the on-the-ground reality remains challenging. Our deputies are often the first point of contact for individuals in mental health crises, yet they are not equipped with the resources needed to provide long-term solutions. Legislative action is needed to address the root causes of these issues—homelessness, addiction, and untreated mental illness—while simultaneously supporting law enforcement’s ability to respond effectively to violent crime.

### Conclusion

The combination of policy decisions, including Proposition 47 and 57, along with the strain on mental health services, have contributed to the rising tide of violent crime throughout Southern California. It is imperative that law enforcement agencies, who are working tirelessly to protect our communities, must be provided the support necessary to address this escalation in crime.

### **Increasing Number of Assaults on Law Enforcement**

One of the most alarming trends the Department has monitored in the last few years is the sharp rise in violence directed toward our deputies. Between 2021 and 2022, we experienced a 55% increase in assaults with a deadly weapon against deputies and a 44% rise in attempted murders targeting law enforcement officers. These statistics highlight the increasingly dangerous environment our deputies face every day as they work to protect the public.

The rise in officer-involved shootings is another reflection of the volatile conditions confronting our deputies. Since Sheriff Dicus took office, the department has seen nearly two officer-involved shootings each month. Our department remains committed to public trust





and holding individuals accountable for their actions, but these incidents speak to broader societal issues, particularly involving substance abuse, homelessness, and mental health crises. Far too often, deputies are the first responders to situations where individuals are driven by untreated addiction or severe mental health conditions, escalating the danger.

In 2022, there were 388 assaults on San Bernardino County deputies across various divisions:

- Valley/Mountain Patrol Stations: 153 incidents
- Desert Patrol Stations: 178 incidents
- Corrections Bureau: 54 incidents
- Specialized/Other Units: 3 incidents

Several high-profile incidents demonstrate these real-life consequences. On August 18, 2021, Deputy Carlos Velasco was critically injured after being ambushed with a rifle after a short vehicle pursuit. The suspect, who later shot at two San Bernardino Police Department officers during his apprehension, was taken into custody. In July 2022, Deputy Marcus Mason was shot during a suspicious vehicle call in Rancho Cucamonga. The suspect, who was on parole and outside his designated area, severely injured Mason, leading to Mason's eventual medical retirement. The case of Deputy John Meyers, struck by a vehicle during a theft investigation in September 2022, highlights another instance of increasing violence. Meyers, like Velasco and Mason, was critically injured while performing his duties.

Further illustrating the ongoing risks, Sergeant Shane Andersen was shot multiple times with a handgun during a "man with a gun" call in December 2023. Despite being critically injured, he is now recovering. The stabbing of Deputy Steven Carter in November 2023 during a disturbance call adds another layer to the growing challenges deputies face in an increasingly violent environment.



These incidents highlight the seriousness of the threat to deputies' safety. Perhaps one of the most concerning cases was the assault on Deputy Megan McCarthy in February 2021, prior to my appointment as Sheriff. McCarthy responded to a domestic disturbance call, and the suspect, Ari Young, opened fire on her patrol vehicle. Fortunately, McCarthy was not physically harmed, but the emotional toll of the attack was significant. Troublingly, Young was later found not guilty of attempted murder by a jury in 2023. However, federal prosecutors have since taken up the case, pursuing additional charges, emphasizing the complexities of justice in cases involving violence against officers.

Prior to Sheriff Dicus' appointment as Sheriff, Deputy Dustin Whitson was critically injured in March 2021 while responding to a call for service, and Sergeant Dominic Vaca was tragically killed in June 2021 while attempting to apprehend a suspect, further emphasizing the increasing dangers deputies face.

The commitment to ensuring the safety and security of our deputies is stronger than ever, but the rising violence presents a significant challenge. These incidents show the growing threat in our communities and highlight the importance of continuous vigilance and support for the men and women who protect us daily.

### Conclusion

The rise in violence against deputies is an urgent issue that demands our attention. The dedicated men and women of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department face increasingly dangerous conditions as they work to maintain public safety. It is essential that we continue to support them with the tools, training, and legal backing necessary to protect themselves and the community. The increasing number of assaults on law enforcement cannot be ignored, and the case of Deputy Megan McCarthy highlights the need for stronger accountability and legislative changes when officers are targeted.



Our deputies remain resilient in the face of these challenges, but it is imperative that we address the root causes of this violence. By improving mental health services, addressing substance abuse, and ensuring that the law fully prosecutes those who attack law enforcement, we can begin to reverse these troubling trends. The safety of our communities depends on it.

## Operation Hammer Strike

In 2021, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department received approximately 1,400 reports of illegal marijuana cultivations, highlighting the growing issue of illicit cannabis production in our region. These illegal operations not only violate state and federal law, but they also have significant environmental, social, and economic consequences. Unregulated cultivations often involve hazardous chemicals, water theft, and environmental degradation, making them a threat to both public health and the local ecosystem.

Recognizing the severity of the problem, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors funded Operation Hammer Strike in August 2021. This year-long operation was designed to aggressively target illegal marijuana grows across the county, particularly in areas where criminal organizations were exploiting the land for unregulated and unsafe cultivation practices. The operation achieved significant results:

- 1,496,906 marijuana plants eradicated
- 194,821 pounds of processed marijuana seized
- \$3,631,667 in U.S. currency seized
- 33 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) labs dismantled
- 363 firearms seized
- 1,379 arrests made
- 1,087 search warrants served
- 8,771 illegal greenhouses cleared



Operation Hammer Strike was a decisive response to the rampant spread of illegal marijuana grows, which had proliferated across rural and residential areas, particularly in the desert and mountain regions of San Bernardino County. The widespread environmental damage caused by these operations was a major concern. Illegal growers frequently use toxic chemicals, including banned pesticides, that contaminate soil and water sources, posing risks to wildlife and local communities. The operation was essential in reducing the environmental hazards associated with these unregulated grows, and it also disrupted the criminal networks responsible for these operations.

By the conclusion of Operation Hammer Strike in August 2022, the number of illegal marijuana cultivation sites had dropped to between 400 and 500—a dramatic reduction from the 1,400 reported at the start of the operation. This decrease demonstrated the effectiveness of a coordinated and sustained law enforcement approach in tackling large-scale illegal cannabis production.

#### Ongoing Enforcement and Shifting Trends

While Operation Hammer Strike officially ended in August 2022, the fight against illegal marijuana cultivation in San Bernardino County continues. As of September 2024, the number of active illegal marijuana cultivation sites has been reduced even further to approximately 100, thanks to the continued efforts of the Sheriff's Department's Marijuana Enforcement Teams (MET). These specialized teams remain focused on identifying and dismantling illegal grows, especially those using hazardous chemicals.

A disturbing trend noticed by investigators is the increased use of illegal pesticides at outdoor cultivation sites, which pose serious health and environmental risks. The Marijuana Enforcement Teams, in partnership with the District Attorney's Office, are aggressively pursuing these cases, filing felony environmental charges against offenders who endanger the environment and public safety.



Local municipalities, including Victorville, Apple Valley, and Hesperia, have also adopted strong measures to combat illegal cultivation. These cities have enacted strict ordinances that impose heavy fines and penalties on individuals involved in marijuana cultivation, which has led to a decrease in illegal grows in those areas.

### Shifting from National Forests to Residential Grows

Another important trend we've observed is the shift in cultivation locations. Over the past several years, the number of illegal marijuana grows in San Bernardino County's National Forests has decreased. This is due, in part, to the challenges and risks associated with growing on federal land. National Forest grows are labor-intensive, limited to a specific growing season, and carry the risk of federal felony charges if arrested.

In contrast, cultivations on private land—particularly in rural desert regions—have increased. These operations are less labor-intensive, can be grown year-round, and if there are no associated environmental violations or utility theft, they often only result in misdemeanor charges. This shift highlights the need for continued vigilance and robust enforcement to ensure these illegal operations do not simply move to more accessible or less regulated locations.

### Why Operation Hammer Strike Was Critical

Operation Hammer Strike was not just about the eradication of marijuana plants—it was about restoring the rule of law in communities affected by illegal cultivation and addressing the broader consequences of unregulated cannabis production. Illegal grows often involve organized criminal elements that exploit vulnerable populations for labor, damage the environment through the use of toxic chemicals, and siphon off precious resources such as water, especially in drought-prone areas. Moreover, these operations create public safety risks, as they are frequently associated with violent crime, including armed confrontations, drug trafficking, and gang activity.



By dismantling over 8,700 greenhouses and seizing nearly 1.5 million marijuana plants, Operation Hammer Strike sent a strong message that San Bernardino County will not tolerate illegal marijuana cultivation. The operation also disrupted the financial infrastructure of these criminal enterprises, seizing millions of dollars in cash and assets and making it harder for these organizations to continue their operations.

Moving forward, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department remains committed to addressing illegal marijuana cultivation through continued enforcement, collaboration with local and state agencies, and a focus on protecting our communities from the social, environmental, and economic harms caused by these illicit operations.

### Conclusion

Operation Hammer Strike was a crucial operation in the County's fight against illegal marijuana cultivation, achieving significant results and dramatically reducing the number of illicit grows. However, the fight is far from over. As the trends shift from national forests to residential areas and as environmental hazards like illegal pesticide use increase, the Sheriff's Department will continue to adapt its strategies to keep San Bernardino County safe and secure. Our ongoing efforts will ensure that we remain vigilant in the face of these evolving challenges.

### **Operation Consequences**

In response to the growing threat of violent crime in San Bernardino County, largely driven by criminal street gangs and the rising use of illegal firearms, particularly privately made firearms (PMFs) or "ghost guns," the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors authorized Crime Suppression Funding in October 2022. This funding enabled the launch of Operation Consequences, a comprehensive initiative to address these escalating threats to public safety.



Operation Consequences was designed to target not only violent street gangs and illegal firearms but also to confront other interconnected issues plaguing the county. These included the epidemic of human trafficking, the proliferation of narcotics sales and trafficking, and the serious problem of parolees at large, many of whom are linked to violent criminal activity.

The operation initially focused on Victorville and other high-priority jurisdictions within San Bernardino County. Investigators from the Sheriff's Special Operations Bureau worked in collaboration with a range of law enforcement agencies, including:

- Department of Homeland Security Investigations
- California Highway Patrol
- San Bernardino County Probation Department
- San Bernardino Police Department
- Fontana Police Department
- Upland Police Department
- Various San Bernardino County patrol stations

This multi-agency collaboration allowed for a coordinated approach to disrupting and dismantling the criminal organizations responsible for the spike in violent crimes. These groups were also heavily involved in human trafficking and drug trafficking, particularly the distribution of dangerous narcotics like fentanyl and methamphetamine. Since the operation's inception in October 2022, investigators have conducted 20 High Desert operations and eight Valley operations, making significant strides in reducing violent crime.

To date, Operation Consequences has produced substantial results, including large-scale arrests, seizures of firearms and narcotics, and the disruption of criminal networks. Below are some of the key statistics from the operation:

- Search Warrants Executed: 1,233



Human Trafficking:

- Arrests: 74
- Victims Rescued: 44

Total Arrests:

- Felony Arrests: 1,419
- Misdemeanor Arrests: 222

Firearms Seized:

- Handguns: 1,069
- Ghost Handguns: 290
- Rifles: 837
- Ghost Rifles: 145

Narcotics Seized:

- Cocaine: 58.28 lbs
- Methamphetamine: 3,140.17 lbs
- Heroin: 27.52 lbs
- Fentanyl: 215.03 lbs

Compliance Checks:

- Parolee Checks: 163
- Probation Checks: 858

Traffic Enforcement:

- Traffic Stops: 13,601
- Citations Issued: 4,647





These statistics reflect the extensive impact Operation Consequences has had on reducing violent crime, particularly in dismantling the networks responsible for distributing drugs and trafficking firearms. The large number of ghost guns seized—290 ghost handguns and 145 ghost rifles—illustrates the growing prevalence of untraceable firearms in the county. Ghost guns, which are assembled from kits and lack serial numbers, have become a significant concern for law enforcement because they are frequently used in violent crimes and evade traditional gun registration processes.

#### The Importance of Targeting Human Trafficking and Narcotics

One of the most critical aspects of Operation Consequences is its focus on human trafficking, an epidemic that continues to devastate vulnerable populations. The operation has resulted in 74 arrests related to human trafficking and, most importantly, has led to the rescue of 44 victims. These rescues represent lives saved from exploitation and abuse, highlighting the broader human impact of this operation beyond the statistics.

Similarly, the seizure of over 3,140 pounds of methamphetamine and more than 215 pounds of fentanyl underscores the scale of narcotics trafficking in the region. Fentanyl, in particular, has been a major contributor to the rise in overdose deaths across the country. The quantity of fentanyl seized during Operation Consequences is enough to kill millions of people, demonstrating how critical it is to prevent these drugs from reaching the streets.

Operation Consequences also conducted extensive parole and probation compliance checks, with 163 parolees and 858 probationers subjected to checks. These compliance efforts are essential in ensuring that individuals on supervised release are not engaging in further criminal activity, especially those who are at high risk of reoffending.

Additionally, over 13,600 traffic stops were made, resulting in 4,647 citations. These stops often serve as the first point of contact for identifying criminal behavior, particularly the



transportation of illegal firearms or narcotics. This layer of enforcement helps disrupt criminal activities before they escalate into more severe offenses.

### Conclusion

Operation Consequences has been a crucial tool in restoring safety and security to San Bernardino County. By targeting violent crime, illegal firearms, narcotics trafficking, and human trafficking, this initiative has made a tangible difference in the lives of our residents. The operation's success demonstrates the power of collaboration between law enforcement agencies at the local, state, and federal levels, working together to combat the most serious threats to public safety.

Moving forward, the Sheriff's Department remains committed to continuing these efforts, ensuring that we build on the successes of Operation Consequences and remain vigilant in the fight against violent crime and criminal exploitation in our communities.

### **Operation Smash and Grab**

In December 2023, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department responded to a troubling rise in retail thefts across the county. These incidents often involved organized theft crews conspiring to commit robberies, burglaries, shelf sweeps, and vandalism. These criminals terrorize businesses and shoppers by using intimidation tactics and operating with a mob mentality, creating unsafe shopping environments for residents. Recognizing the severity of the situation, the Sheriff's Department launched Operation Smash and Grab, using Crime Suppression Funding to specifically target organized retail crime.

Operation Smash and Grab concentrates its efforts on major shopping districts in Apple Valley, Hesperia, Victorville, Chino Hills, and Rancho Cucamonga, aiming to disrupt and dismantle the organized groups responsible for these crimes. Investigators use a variety of conventional and non-conventional investigative methods to track and arrest suspects while also working closely with loss prevention officers at retail stores to combat the thefts. This



strong collaboration has already shown promise, and these partnerships will be instrumental in the operation's long-term success.

A major challenge in addressing these crimes stems from Proposition 47, which reclassified certain theft-related offenses, such as shoplifting and property crimes under \$950, from felonies to misdemeanors. Under Prop 47, a suspect cannot be arrested for a misdemeanor unless the crime is committed in the presence of a peace officer. This legal change has emboldened organized theft rings, as they often work in large groups and strike quickly, making it difficult for law enforcement to catch them in the act. These crews exploit the limitations imposed by Prop 47, knowing that the threshold for a felony charge is higher and arrests are less likely unless officers are on the scene at the time of the crime.

Operation Smash and Grab directly addresses this issue by employing investigative techniques that allow law enforcement to identify suspects and track their activities over time, even when thefts occur outside the immediate presence of a peace officer. By using surveillance, undercover operations, and collaboration with retailers, the Sheriff's Department is working to overcome the barriers presented by Prop 47 and ensure that these criminals are held accountable.

Key Statistics from Operation Smash and Grab (December 2023 – September 2024):

- Search Warrants Issued: 10
- Felony Arrests: 134
- Misdemeanor Arrests: 303
- Value of Recovered Property: \$169,738.69

Operation Smash and Grab is critical in overcoming these challenges by employing proactive strategies to identify and track suspects. Investigators work with loss prevention officers and retail staff to gather evidence and establish patterns of criminal activity. This collaboration helps ensure that evidence is collected to support future charges even if



arrests cannot be made at the scene. By using wiretaps, surveillance, and undercover operations, the operation seeks to disrupt these organized theft rings and reduce the prevalence of thefts that terrorize businesses and shoppers alike.

### Looking Forward

Operation Smash and Grab has made significant strides in reducing organized retail theft across San Bernardino County. The Sheriff's Department remains committed to expanding these efforts and adapting strategies to stay ahead of criminal organizations that continue to evolve their tactics.

As Proposition 47 continues to present challenges, the operation will rely on innovative law enforcement techniques and strong partnerships with the retail community. By continuing to work closely with loss prevention officers, retailers, and other law enforcement agencies, Operation Smash and Grab will ensure that organized retail theft is addressed and significantly reduced.

The Sheriff's Department will continue monitoring theft patterns and responding with targeted operations, ensuring that San Bernardino County's shopping districts remain safe for businesses and residents. The success of Operation Smash and Grab thus far underscores the importance of taking a proactive, multi-faceted approach to combating organized crime, even in the face of legal limitations like Prop 47.

### **Operation Dust Devil**

In December 2022, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors provided specific funding to the Sheriff's Department to enhance county-wide Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) enforcement. The purpose of this initiative was two fold: to address quality-of-life issues stemming from illegal OHV activities in local communities and to protect the county's environmentally sensitive natural resources. Following this decision, the Sheriff's



Department launched Operation Dust Devil in 2023, a coordinated enforcement effort that spanned 11 weeks.

Operation Dust Devil aimed to increase law enforcement presence in areas most impacted by illegal OHV use. This operation was a collaborative effort between the Sheriff's Department's dedicated OHV team—comprising eight deputies, two corporals, and one sergeant—and a range of local, state, and federal agencies. Together, these agencies worked to educate the public about safe and legal OHV practices, as well as enforce laws related to illegal OHV riding that affects public safety and local environments.

Participating agencies included:

- San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
- California Highway Patrol (CHP)
- U.S. Forest Service
- Colton Police Department
- San Bernardino Police Department
- Rialto Police Department
- Riverside County Sheriff's Department
- Riverside County Code Enforcement
- San Bernardino County Code Enforcement
- San Bernardino County Flood Control
- California State Parks
- Department of Fish & Wildlife
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Hesperia Parks & Recreation District Police
- BNSF Railroad Police



The coordinated efforts of these agencies were critical in ensuring the success of Operation Dust Devil, which focused on both public education and enforcement. By educating riders about legal OHV areas and the dangers of unsafe OHV practices, the operation sought to mitigate the negative impacts of illegal OHV use. Additionally, the enforcement component was necessary to protect public lands, prevent environmental degradation, and reduce the strain illegal OHV activity places on local communities.

#### Key Statistics from Operation Dust Devil (2023):

- Educational Contacts: 14,402
- California Vehicle Code Citations Issued: 157
- Penal Code Citations Issued: 43
- County/City Code Violations Issued: 134
- Arrests Made: 10
- Vehicles Towed/Impounded: 31
- Search and Rescue/Medical Aid Responses: 3

#### Why Operation Dust Devil is Important

Illegal OHV activities present a significant quality-of-life issue for many communities across San Bernardino County. Unauthorized riders often trespass on private property, damage public lands, and create noise disturbances that disrupt local neighborhoods. In addition to the social impact, illegal OHV use can lead to serious environmental consequences, including damage to fragile ecosystems, erosion, and the destruction of natural habitats.

Moreover, unsafe OHV practices endanger not only the riders themselves but also the public. Illegal riding in unauthorized areas, such as highways, railroads, and flood control areas, increases the risk of accidents and injuries. These activities also place a strain on public resources, requiring increased medical aid and search and rescue responses.



Through Operation Dust Devil, the Sheriff's Department and its partner agencies sought to address these issues head-on. By making 14,402 educational contacts, the operation focused on raising awareness among OHV riders about the legal areas available for riding and the rules they must follow to ride safely. These contacts were critical in reducing illegal activities and fostering compliance with OHV regulations.

The enforcement aspect of the operation was equally important. By issuing over 150 vehicle code citations for traffic-related violations and over 130 county/city code citations for illegal use of public and private lands, the operation sent a clear message that illegal OHV activity would not be tolerated. Additionally, the seizure of 31 vehicles and the arrests of 10 individuals helped to deter unlawful behavior further.

### Looking Forward

The success of Operation Dust Devil demonstrates the effectiveness of a collaborative approach in addressing illegal OHV use. The strong relationships between the Sheriff's Department and local, state, and federal agencies allowed for a comprehensive response that combined education, enforcement, and public safety efforts. The operation helped protect San Bernardino County's natural resources, supported community well-being and reduced the dangers of illegal OHV activities.

The Sheriff's Department remains committed to ongoing OHV enforcement efforts. By continuing to educate the public and strictly enforcing the laws around OHV use, we aim to preserve San Bernardino County's natural beauty and ensure its residents enjoy a safe and peaceful environment.

### **Operation Shelter Me**

Operation Shelter Me is a vital initiative funded by Community Concerns resources from the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors. This program offers a collaborative outreach approach, bringing together sworn law enforcement personnel and social workers to contact



some of the county's most severely mentally ill homeless residents. The objective is to connect these individuals with essential resources while also investigating whether they meet the criteria for treatment under Laura's Law. Adopted by San Bernardino County in 2023, Laura's Law provides a legal pathway for treatment-resistant individuals—those with histories of incarceration or violence—to be directed into court-supervised treatment programs when they meet certain legal criteria.

Since its inception, Operation Shelter Me has conducted 22 outreach events across the county, resulting in significant community engagement. To date, the operation has made contact with 1,246 individuals, directly linking 33 of them to housing solutions and connecting 924 to various services, ranging from healthcare to rehabilitation programs. Importantly, the program has initiated over 50 investigations under Laura's Law, with 40 cases referred to the Department of Behavioral Health for intensive follow-up. In two cases, individuals have entered the first stages of the Laura's Law court process, potentially leading to conservatorship, which would allow for more structured and long-term care.

Looking ahead, the Community Service and Reentry Division (CSRSD) will continue to lead Operation Shelter Me events throughout the county. The goal remains to expand these efforts, ensuring that every qualifying individual receives a thorough investigation and is referred to appropriate treatment pathways to address their medical and mental health needs. By continuing to connect vulnerable residents with services and exploring court-mandated treatment options where necessary, OSM will remain a crucial tool in the county's ongoing efforts to combat homelessness and mental illness.

This operation highlights the ongoing commitment of San Bernardino County to support its most vulnerable residents, providing innovative and compassionate solutions for individuals who might otherwise fall through the cracks of traditional care systems.





### SECTION 3: SUPPORT OPERATIONS

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is continuously advancing its equipment and operational strategies to ensure that our personnel are well-prepared to serve the community effectively. As part of our commitment to modernize and enhance our capabilities, several key initiatives have been implemented in recent years. The introduction of the Blauer FlexRS Uniform provides deputies with a modern, durable, and professional uniform that improves comfort and functionality in the field.

In line with our focus on accountability, we have fully deployed Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs) across our patrol divisions, with plans to expand the program to our corrections facilities. These cameras have become an essential tool for enhancing public trust, providing crucial evidence for investigations, and improving officer safety.



Furthermore, the department has transitioned to new Aero Precision AR-15 rifles and introduced red-dot handgun sights, offering deputies improved accuracy and response capabilities in high-risk situations. Our patrol units have also been upgraded with ballistic door panels for added protection and Hi-Lo sirens to assist with evacuations during critical incidents.

In addition to these advancements, the establishment of the Transit Enforcement Division reflects our proactive approach to ensuring public safety across San Bernardino County's growing transportation infrastructure. This division oversees security on public transit systems, ensuring that deputies are positioned to protect commuters and respond quickly to incidents. Finally, the expansion of the Mobile Field Force has strengthened our department's ability to handle large-scale public order events, natural disasters, and critical incidents. This specialized unit is equipped to respond swiftly and effectively, ensuring public safety during complex operations.

### **Modernizing the Look of a Deputy Sheriff**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has been actively working to modernize the uniforms worn by deputies, with a focus on improving comfort and functionality and maintaining a professional appearance. The journey to revamp the uniform system began in 2018 when the Sheriff's Uniform Committee, with the approval of the Office of the Sheriff, conducted extensive wear tests to evaluate several new uniform systems. These tests included a variety of designs, such as outer vest covers, uniforms with suspenders, and load-bearing vests, but most did not meet the department's requirements. One system, however, emerged as a standout—the Blauer FlexRS Uniform.

The Blauer FlexRS Uniform offers a tactical, flexible solution while maintaining a professional look almost identical to the department's traditional "Class A" uniforms. The shirt includes mesh side panels to enhance breathability, provide a greater range of motion, and feature a Teflon coating for water resistance. The accompanying pants, designed with



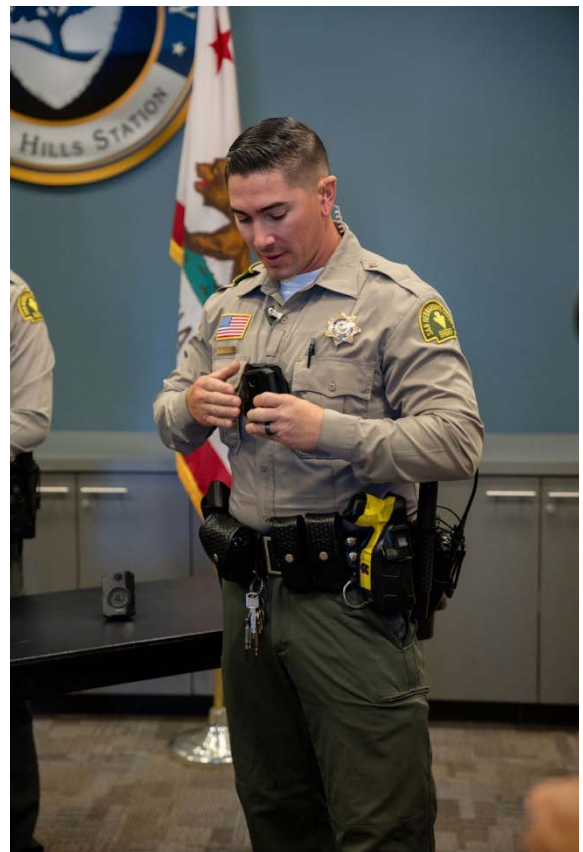
rugged stretch ripstop material, also offer low-profile zippered cargo pockets for secure storage of gear like magazines and cell phones. Importantly, both the shirt and pants are “wash and wear,” eliminating the need for dry cleaning, which adds to the convenience and ease of use.

A broader wear test of the Blauer uniform was conducted between December 1, 2020, and March 12, 2021, involving approximately forty deputies, corporals, and sergeants from across the county. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants praising the uniform’s lightweight construction, flexibility, and added storage options. Following this successful test, the Board of Chiefs and the Office of the Sheriff officially approved the Blauer uniform on November 12, 2021. The uniform has since replaced the previous "Class A," "Class B," and "Class D" uniforms, providing deputies with a more comfortable and functional option that maintains the department’s professional image.

Together, the introduction of the Blauer Uniform and the ongoing load bearing vest testing demonstrate the department’s commitment to ensuring that its deputies are equipped with modern, practical gear that enhances their comfort, safety, and performance while upholding the high standards of professional appearance.

### Body Worn Cameras

At the outset, Sheriff Dicus’ administration made a clear and public commitment to enhance the public trust, accountability, and trust between the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department (SBCSD) and the community. A cornerstone of that commitment was the deployment of Body-Worn





Cameras (BWCs) for deputies, a program that has become instrumental in modern law enforcement practices nationwide. Today, the department is proud to announce that we have not only fully implemented BWCs across our patrol divisions but are now in the process of expanding this vital technology to our corrections facilities.

The decision to equip our deputies with BWCs was not made lightly. It was a promise rooted in our ongoing mission to improve public safety, ensure accountability, and maintain the high standards of professionalism that our department upholds. While the importance of this initiative was never in doubt, the process itself presented unique challenges, particularly given the vast geographical size of San Bernardino County—the largest county in the United States. The deployment of over 1,200 cameras across 26 divisions, including rural and remote Resident Deputy posts, required significant logistical coordination and careful execution. The diverse and expansive nature of the county's terrain and the range of operational environments added layers of complexity that took longer than initially anticipated.

Despite these challenges, our personnel's hard work and dedication made this critical initiative a reality. Today, all our patrol deputies are equipped with BWCs, which serve as an essential tool in our commitment to public trust. The cameras provide an objective and reliable record of deputy interactions with the public, ensuring that our actions are not only visible but verifiable. This has strengthened our ability to maintain the public's trust, as the footage captured can be reviewed in real-time and shared with the community during significant incidents, further fostering open communication with the public.

In addition to enhancing public trust, BWCs have brought tangible benefits to our department's operational efficiency and effectiveness. The cameras provide critical evidence that has bolstered criminal prosecutions, improved the integrity of case management, and reduced the number of unfounded complaints against our deputies. This has directly contributed to increased officer safety and reduced the need for higher levels of force during



tense encounters. Furthermore, the recordings help investigators, and the public better understand the challenges our deputies face in real-time, particularly during critical incidents involving the use of force.

Looking ahead, we are excited to expand this program even further. In the coming months, we will be deploying an additional 700 BWCs in our corrections facilities, including the West Valley, High Desert, and Central Detention Centers. This expansion will bring the total number of cameras in operation to nearly 2,000, ensuring that our commitment to public trust and accountability extends across all aspects of our operations—from patrol to corrections.

As we continue to roll out BWCs in corrections, we anticipate that the cameras will serve many of the same purposes as they do on patrol—providing crucial evidence, enhancing officer safety, and offering objective clarity in incidents involving inmate interactions. We believe this will not only improve internal processes and oversight within our detention facilities but will also lead to greater public confidence in the integrity of our correctional operations.

In parallel with this expansion, the department is exploring other advanced technologies to complement our BWC program. For example, we are upgrading our Tasers to the new Taser 10 model, which offers improved range and de-escalation capabilities, and implementing Virtual Reality (VR) training systems that focus on lethal and non-lethal decision-making scenarios. These advancements, alongside our BWC initiative, solidify our department's commitment to integrating cutting-edge technology to enhance safety, accountability, and effectiveness in all areas of law enforcement.

The deployment of BWCs has been a challenging but necessary journey, and while the road may have been longer than expected, we are now seeing the significant benefits of this investment. We are proud of the strides we have made in fulfilling this promise and remain



committed to ensuring that our department continues to lead with integrity, accountability, and public trust. With BWCs now fully implemented in patrol and soon to be expanded to corrections, we are setting a higher standard for law enforcement not only within San Bernardino County but across the state.

This initiative is not just about technology but about reaffirming our department's dedication to serving the public with honesty and professionalism. It is about building stronger, safer communities where both the public and law enforcement can trust that their interactions are documented fairly and accurately and where accountability is the cornerstone of our approach to public safety.

### **New Long Rifles and Handgun Enhancements**

Since November 2022, the Sheriff's Department has transitioned from the Ruger Mini 14 to the Aero Precision AR-15 rifle, a platform that enhances both accuracy and safety for deputies in the field. This upgrade is critical in responding to the increasing violence throughout the state, where deputies are encountering heavily armed suspects more frequently. As of Fall 2024, approximately 750 AR-15 rifles have been deployed across patrol stations, with an additional 268 rifles on order. The final deployment, including equipping Court Services and Correctional Facilities, is expected by July 2025.

One of the key advancements in the AR-15 rifles being deployed is the inclusion of holographic sights, which offer deputies a faster and more accurate target acquisition system. Holographic and red dot sights have become increasingly favored by law enforcement agencies because of their ability to improve precision while reducing the time it takes to align a shot, especially in high-pressure situations.

Research has demonstrated that holographic and red dot sights make officers more effective and increase safety for law enforcement and the public. These sights allow deputies to engage targets more quickly and accurately, particularly in low-light conditions or fast-



moving situations. The enhanced visibility provided by holographic sights reduces the chances of missed shots, minimizing unintended and ensuring that deputies can respond to threats more efficiently.

These technological upgrades are essential given the rise in violent crime and the increasing use of illegal firearms—particularly ghost guns—by criminal elements. As a result, deputies are now deploying their long rifles more frequently during high-risk encounters, including incidents involving armed suspects. The AR-15's superior accuracy and the use of holographic sights give deputies a tactical advantage, enabling them to stop threats more effectively while enhancing public safety.

To support the transition to the AR-15 platform, over 1,620 sworn personnel and 30 reserve deputies have successfully completed the transition rifle course, ensuring they are well-trained to utilize the new system in the field. This training is vital as deputies face increasingly dangerous situations where precision and speed are critical.

In addition to the rifle upgrades, the department is advancing its holographic sight handgun program. Currently, about 400 of the department's 1,900 sworn members have completed the POST-approved Red Dot Handgun course, which has also been shown to improve accuracy in high-stress environments. To further integrate this technology, the Training Division plans to purchase 60 Glock handguns equipped with red-dot optics. These handguns will be used in the Basic Academy's firearms training program during the 2024-2025 fiscal year, ensuring new recruits are equipped with the latest tools and technology to meet the challenges they will face in the field.

The Department has also authorized the use of red dot sights on deputies' handguns if they have successfully completed the transition and the firearm has been approved by the department.



## Enhancements to Patrol Vehicles

Since 2014, the Sheriff's Department has made continuous upgrades to its patrol vehicles, prioritizing both officer safety and public protection. One key enhancement is the installation of ballistic door panels in all patrol vehicles. After a thorough assessment by the Emergency Vehicle Operations Center (EVOC), it was determined that the panels had a negligible impact on handling while significantly improving protection from gunfire. These panels, now standard on all new patrol units, provide deputies with an added layer of defense in the face of increasing violence, including encounters with armed suspects.

In addition to these safety features, the department has incorporated the Hi-Lo siren system, which was recommended after the Paradise Fire in California. The Hi-Lo sirens are specifically designed to signal emergency evacuations and have proven to be highly effective in disaster-prone areas. This distinct two-tone siren, different from standard emergency sounds, alerts residents that immediate evacuation is necessary during critical incidents such as wildfires, floods, or hazardous material emergencies.

To ensure clear communication during evacuations, the Hi-Lo sirens are equipped with pre-recorded messages in English, Spanish, and Mandarin, accommodating the diverse population within San Bernardino County. The ability to broadcast multi-language evacuation orders ensures that crucial instructions reach a broader audience, allowing for faster, more organized evacuations and reducing risks to public safety.

By incorporating both ballistic door panels to enhance officer safety and Hi-Lo sirens to facilitate swift evacuations, the Sheriff's Department continues to ensure that its patrol vehicles are fully equipped to meet the evolving challenges of law enforcement and public protection.





## Establishment of Transit Enforcement Division

The Transit Operations Division was created in response to growing public safety concerns on transit systems nationwide, including in San Bernardino County, which houses one of the busiest commuter lines in Southern California, the Metrolink San Bernardino Line.

Additionally, Metrolink's commuter rail system is the third largest in the country, making security on these systems a high priority for the Sheriff's Department.

### Formation and Growth

In 2022, the department was approached by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) through the San Bernardino County Transit Authority (SBCTA), requesting contractual law enforcement services for the Arrow train line, a new commuter line running from downtown San Bernardino to the University of Redlands. Around the same time, the Victor Valley Transit Authority (VVTA) also sought law enforcement services for its expansive bus network, which operates across more than 1,000 miles of routes, covering the High Desert and extending into San Bernardino Valley.

In March 2023, after the County Board of Supervisors approved these contracts, the department launched two distinct law enforcement teams: the Victor Valley Transit Detail (VVTD) under the command of the Victor Valley Station and the Metrolink Detail under the Central Station. Initially, each team consisted of a small number of deputies and a sergeant, but their potential for growth became evident as they received positive feedback from their communities.

As a result, in March 2024, both transit details were consolidated under a Lieutenant, establishing the Transit Operations Division, which now oversees not only the VVTA and Metrolink services but also the Sheriff's Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) program and the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) program. This restructuring has further enhanced the department's ability to provide comprehensive public safety services to the county's transportation infrastructure.



### Metrolink Detail: Protecting San Bernardino's Rail System

Formed in April 2023, the Metrolink Detail is tasked with ensuring safety and security on the Arrow-Line trains that run between San Bernardino and Redlands. The initial team consisted of five deputies and one sergeant, providing round-the-clock service every day of the week. Since its inception, this detail has made over 800 arrests while managing several other responsibilities, including fare enforcement, homeless outreach, and right-of-way safety.

The Arrow Line, with its 42 daily trains and approximately 7,300 weekly riders, saw an impressive 107% increase in ridership by June 2023. Prior to the department's involvement, this section of the rail was one of Metrolink's most dangerous, with numerous train-versus-pedestrian incidents. Since the start of contracted law enforcement services, only one train strike has occurred, a testament to the deputies' diligent work in keeping the right-of-way clear and preventing encampments near the tracks.

The deputies work closely with Cal-Trans, the San Bernardino Police Department, CHP, and the Community Services and Re-Entry Division (CSR) to manage encampment clean-ups and ensure safety along the railway. Their quick responses have led to fugitive arrests, the prevention of vehicle burglaries, and the recovery of a runaway juvenile.

### Victor Valley Transit Detail: Enhancing Safety for Bus Riders

The Victor Valley Transit Detail (VVT) began operations in March 2023, ensuring the safety and security of the Victor Valley Transit Authority (VVT), which operates throughout the High Desert and the San Bernardino Valley. The team, consisting of four deputies and one sergeant, is responsible for overseeing safety across all 91 buses, 1,100 public bus stops, and VVT's roughly one million annual riders.

Since its formation, the VVT has made over 200 arrests and carried out a range of operations, including fare evasion enforcement, traffic enforcement, and community



outreach. One of the detail's key achievements has been the introduction and training presentation created for VVTA drivers. This presentation, delivered over a week, introduced the deputies and educational training on recognizing suspicious activity, de-escalation techniques, and reporting protocols.

VVTD deputies also collaborate with local jurisdictions on serious investigations, including homicides, traffic fatalities, and missing persons cases. They work closely with the Sheriff's HOPE Team, providing referrals for homeless individuals seeking assistance.

The strong relationship between VVTD and VVTA has led to the approval of funding for an additional deputy and one corporal, pending County Board of Supervisors approval.

#### Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Program

The OHV Program plays a critical role in enforcing laws across the largest legal OHV recreation areas in the state. Over the past seven years, the department has trained over 200 safety members participating in OHV operations as a collateral duty. The department's fleet includes over 30 OHVs, such as dual-sport motorcycles, quads, and side-by-sides, used for both OHV enforcement and Search and Rescue (S&R) operations.

In 2023, the OHV team made over 25,000 public contacts, engaging with residents about OHV safety, education, and enforcement. As part of its targeted enforcement, the team works closely with local law enforcement, County Code Enforcement, and Flood Control authorities to ensure compliance.

The department is exploring the possibility of establishing a full-time OHV team within the Transit Operations Division to centralize resources and provide a more proactive approach to addressing illegal OHV activities.



### Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) Program

Funded by a \$1,155,000 grant, the OTS Program supports various traffic safety initiatives, including DUI checkpoints, distracted driving enforcement, and seat belt operations. The grant, distributed across 11 patrol stations, funds traffic enforcement efforts based on previous years' statistics.

In 2024-2025, two additional grants totaling over \$1.7 million will be used for new equipment, including breath-testing machines and operational costs.

### Conclusion

With the formation of the Transit Operations Division, the Sheriff's Department is enhancing the security and safety of public transportation in San Bernardino County. By ensuring proactive enforcement, community engagement, and specialized training, this division is set to address the complex challenges that come with modern transit systems. These efforts not only safeguard commuters but also reflect the department's commitment to improving public safety countywide.

### **Establishment of Customer Service Unit**

Established in 2022, the Sheriff's Customer Service Unit (CSU) was developed to relieve pressure on the overwhelmed in-person reporting system, allowing deputies to focus on higher-priority calls. The unit, made up of one Sergeant and eight Sheriff Safety Specialists, is co-located at the Desert Communications Center and Sheriff's Records Unit at the Sheriff's Headquarters. In the 2023-2024 fiscal year alone, the CSU handled 10,007 calls for service and documented 4,702 reports, making it an invaluable part of the department's strategy to manage resources more efficiently.

CSU allows residents to file reports for non-emergency incidents such as theft, vandalism, and property crimes without requiring a deputy's physical presence. By handling these lower-priority calls remotely, CSU has improved response times for more urgent matters



and streamlined the department's overall operations. This system enables deputies to prioritize critical incidents while CSU Sheriff's Service Specialists ensure reports are accurately processed and recorded, offering a faster and more convenient option for the public.

CSU Sheriff's Service Specialists are well-trained to handle a variety of calls and tasks, including responding to records requests, follow-up inquiries, and report clarifications. As the first point of contact for many residents, the CSU plays a critical role in maintaining public interaction with law enforcement, particularly for residents in remote areas who may find it challenging to visit a station. CSU's ability to provide comprehensive service over the phone has significantly improved the department's accessibility and outreach.

Since the inception of the Customer Service Unit, the division has handled nearly 16,000 calls for service and drawn nearly 8,000 deputy reports. The savings in time and resources allow the deputies to utilize the additional time for proactive enforcement and have saved nearly 12,000 hours for our patrol deputies.

Looking ahead, the Sheriff's Department plans to further enhance the CSU's capabilities by integrating digital reporting platforms, which would allow residents to file reports through online portals or mobile apps. This will further reduce the workload on both phone lines and field deputies, ensuring that resources are focused where they are needed most. Through continued innovation and expansion, the CSU will keep improving its role in maintaining public safety and accessibility across San Bernardino County.

This unit exemplifies the department's commitment to evolving with the times, providing practical solutions to modern challenges while maintaining a high standard of service for the community.



## Expansion of The Mobile Field Force

The Mobile Field Force (MFF) is a specialized unit within the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department designed to respond rapidly and effectively to large-scale public order events, protests, and other high-risk situations. The MFF is crucial in maintaining peace and security, particularly in situations requiring organized, strategic crowd management, disaster response, or critical incident intervention.

### What is the Mobile Field Force?

The Mobile Field Force is a versatile law enforcement response team comprised of highly trained deputies equipped to handle various scenarios, from peaceful protests to natural disasters. The concept behind the MFF is to provide a well-coordinated and organized unit that can respond quickly to situations where large groups of people are involved or where specialized intervention is needed. This force is not a permanent full-time unit but is staffed as an ancillary duty, meaning members of the MFF take on these responsibilities in addition to their regular assignments.

Initially, the MFF focused on traditional crowd control, force protection, and protest response. However, the scope of its duties has evolved over time to include disaster response and other critical missions, reflecting the diverse challenges faced by modern law enforcement and San Bernardino County.

### Why is the Mobile Field Force Important?

The importance of the MFF lies in its adaptability, readiness, and effectiveness. In today's environment, law enforcement agencies must be prepared for a wide array of situations that can escalate quickly. From the unpredictable nature of protests to the increasing frequency of natural disasters, the need for a specialized force that can respond rapidly and effectively has never been greater.



The MFF's ability to operate in both urban and rural environments, manage large crowds, handle civil unrest, and secure evacuated areas during disasters is essential to the safety and security of San Bernardino County. Their deployment ensures that law enforcement is able to maintain order, protect property, and, most importantly, safeguard lives during times of chaos or uncertainty.

### Modernization of the Mobile Field Force (2019-2022)

Recognizing the need for an updated and more robust Mobile Field Force, a dedicated committee was formed in 2019 to lead the modernization efforts. This committee, consisting of two captains, four lieutenants, and three sergeants, undertook a comprehensive review of the MFF's structure, equipment, and training protocols. The goal was to create a modernized unit that could meet the complex challenges of modern policing.

Key to this modernization was the recruitment of personnel from across the county, including sergeants, corporals, and deputies. These individuals underwent rigorous training and were equipped with state-of-the-art tools to ensure their effectiveness in the field. As a result, the newly restructured MFF became a highly trained and well-equipped force capable of handling a variety of high-risk situations, and members were assigned to this unit as a fixed ancillary duty, ensuring consistency and preparedness.

### Critical Deployments and Expanding Roles (2020-2022)

The summer of 2020 was a defining moment for law enforcement across the nation. Following the death of George Floyd, protests erupted nationwide, including in San Bernardino County. The MFF was quickly deployed to manage these protests, providing a coordinated response to both planned and unplanned events. The MFF was active in cities such as San Bernardino, Fontana, Victorville, and Rancho Cucamonga, among others. Their presence was instrumental in maintaining public order while protecting both protesters' rights and public safety.



In addition to protests, the MFF was deployed multiple times to locations such as the Geo ICE facility in Adelanto and the San Bernardino Superior Courthouse, as well as to critical infrastructure that required heightened security.

The El Dorado Fire in September 2020 proved the need to further expand the MFF's role. As the fire raged within the Yucaipa Station's jurisdiction, local patrol staffing levels were nearly depleted. In response, a policy proposal was introduced and later approved, allowing the MFF to be utilized not only in crowd management and security roles but also during natural disasters. This policy change, formalized in August 2022, significantly expanded the capabilities of the MFF, allowing them to assist with evacuations, security of evacuated areas, and support for emergency operations during large-scale natural events.

#### Mobile Field Force in Action: Key Deployments (2022-2024)

Since its restructuring and expansion, the MFF has been an integral part of the department's response to a range of critical incidents, including:

- 2022 Deployments: The MFF was deployed for one protest, three security events, and one natural disaster (Radford Fire).
- 2023 Deployments: The unit responded to three protests, three security events, and one natural disaster (Mountain Snowstorm).
- 2024 Deployments: The MFF has already been deployed for three protests and two natural disaster (Line & Bridge Fires).

In each of these cases, the MFF's rapid response and adaptability ensured that the department was able to protect public safety while efficiently managing large-scale events and emergencies.

#### Structure and Capabilities

As of 2024, the Mobile Field Force consists of:





- Staffing: 4 captains, 5 lieutenants, 10 sergeants, and 115 deputies organized into squads. Two of these squads are specialized Chemical Agent/Arrest Teams, tasked with handling situations that require the deployment of chemical agents or mass arrests.
- Squad Composition: Each squad comprises a sergeant, corporals, and deputies, ensuring a strong leadership structure and cohesive teamwork.

### Transition to the Emergency Operations Division (2022)

In 2022, oversight of the MFF was moved from the committee structure to the Emergency Operations Division. This change allowed for better coordination, improved tracking of resources, and streamlined processes related to equipment, training, and reimbursement. This organizational shift has enabled the MFF to operate with greater efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring they are always prepared for deployment when needed.

### Conclusion

The Mobile Field Force is a critical asset within the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. With its ability to adapt to various situations—protests, natural disasters, and high-profile events—the MFF exemplifies the department's commitment to public safety, order, and responsiveness. The modernization efforts undertaken since 2019 have positioned the MFF as a highly capable, well-trained, and well-equipped force ready to meet the ever-evolving challenges the county faces.

As the MFF grows in scope and capability, it will remain a key element in the department's strategic approach to maintaining peace, order, and public safety, ensuring that San Bernardino County is well-protected in times of crisis and uncertainty.



## Concealed Weapons Permits

The issuance of Concealed Carry Weapon (CCW) permits is essential in a county as vast as San Bernardino, which spans over 20,000 square miles. Sheriff Dicus believes that it is important for residents to be able to protect themselves, their families, and their property, especially in cases where a deputy sheriff may not respond to a call quickly. Empowering responsible, law-abiding citizens through CCW permits enhances both personal safety and the security of our communities.

The Sheriff takes this responsibility with a profound respect for the Second Amendment and a clear recognition of the weight of carrying a concealed firearm. Our process ensures that applicants meet all legal standards.

Our CCW process begins with a comprehensive background check and an in-depth evaluation of each applicant's suitability. This includes reviewing their criminal history, mental health status, and any potential risk factors that may disqualify them. We take these steps to ensure that only qualified individuals are granted the ability to carry a concealed weapon. Additionally, applicants must complete state-mandated training that covers firearm safety, legal responsibilities, and situational awareness to prepare them for the responsibility of carrying a firearm.

Recognizing the growing demand for CCW permits, we have worked to improve the application process and make it more accessible. In January 2024, we implemented the Permitium system, which has significantly streamlined the process. It has reduced the time it takes to process applications from six to nine months down to about three to four months. This system allows applicants to complete their forms online, reducing travel time and expediting the review process. In some cases, individuals who apply can have an interview within a week. Since Permitium was introduced, we have processed 1,331 new applications and 2,661 renewals, highlighting the efficiency of the new system.



Additionally, Senate Bill 2, which took effect in January 2024, introduced several changes to CCW permit requirements. We now require 16 hours of training for new applicants, compared to the previous 8-hour course, and 8 hours for renewals, up from 4 hours. There is also a mandatory mental health training component to ensure that applicants are well-prepared and fully understand the weight of carrying a concealed weapon. These changes are reflected in the enhanced training programs offered by the department and our approved external vendors.

To further accommodate the demand for permits, the Sheriff's CCW unit has been expanded to include 12 personnel, including three sworn officers, dedicated to processing applications. We have also opened additional office space in Victorville to serve High Desert residents, providing more convenient access for in-person interviews, which are now the only step requiring an applicant's physical presence.

The Sheriff is committed to ensuring that this process remains efficient, thorough, and secure, allowing responsible citizens to exercise their rights. By modernizing our application process, expanding our resources, and upholding the highest standards of review, we continue to ensure that only those who are responsible and prepared are entrusted with the serious responsibility of carrying a concealed weapon.

## **Valley Dispatch Center Groundbreaking**

On March 19, 2024, San Bernardino County took a significant step forward in enhancing its emergency response capabilities by breaking ground on the long-awaited Valley Communications Center. We are proud to witness the construction of this state-of-the-art facility, which will be a game-changer for the way we manage emergencies and protect the public.

For over 30 years, our Sheriff's communications center for the valley, known as the "Eagle Center," has operated out of a temporary steel warehouse in Rialto. While our dispatch team



has done an exceptional job working under those conditions, the facility itself has long been inadequate to meet the growing demands of modern public safety. That is about to change. The Valley Communications Center will serve as the new home for our Sheriff's dispatch team. This 75,085-square-foot facility, expected to be completed by October 2025, is designed to accommodate up to 454 emergency planners and responders, ensuring that we can operate at full capacity even during the most severe disasters. The building's earthquake-resistant design, built with a base-isolation system and multiple redundancies, will allow it to function independently for up to three days if cut off from outside services.

What makes this project particularly exciting for our department is the next-generation 911 technology that will be integrated into the new dispatch center. This technology, along with enhanced mapping capabilities, will provide increased situational awareness for our team, allowing us to respond more quickly and effectively to emergencies across this vast county. The new building has also been designed with cutting-edge ergonomics to support our dispatch professionals, ensuring that they can continue to perform their mission under optimal conditions, even during extended operations.

This new facility will undoubtedly enhance our ability to safeguard the residents of San Bernardino County. It brings together local, state, and federal partners under one roof, ensuring that our response to emergencies is coordinated and efficient. From natural disasters like wildfires and floods to large-scale public safety incidents, the Valley Communications Center will provide the space and technological infrastructure needed to respond swiftly and effectively.

Funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) at a total cost of \$125 million, this facility is a smart investment in public safety and a model of environmental responsibility. It will be LEED Gold-certified, with sustainable features like a 700-kVA photovoltaic system to generate clean energy on-site. The smallest environmental footprint paired with the greatest



possible service impact aligns with the county's vision for the future, and we are proud to support that goal.

The department has seen firsthand the challenges of emergency situations—from natural disasters to critical incidents involving public safety—and we are confident that this new facility will transform how we plan, prepare, respond, and recover. It represents a substantial leap forward in our ability to protect the community while integrating advanced technology that will serve the needs of our growing population.

As we look toward completing this vital project in 2025, we are committed to ensuring that our department is fully equipped to meet the demands of tomorrow. The Valley Communications Center stands as a testament to our county's commitment to innovation, safety, and resilience, and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on the residents of San Bernardino County for years to come.

## **Scientific Investigations Division**

In 2024, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department's Scientific Investigations Division has made remarkable progress, thanks to increased funding and the introduction of state-of-the-art equipment. The division not only supports our department but also provides crucial crime lab services to all municipal police departments within San Bernardino County. These advancements reflect our collective commitment to innovation, scientific excellence, and delivering justice through efficient forensic investigations across the entire region.

### Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) Funding

One of the most significant strides we've made is securing funding for the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS). This system is a critical tool for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our laboratory operations. We are now in the process of gathering proposals from qualified vendors to select a system that will enhance our data management and workflow capabilities.



Once implemented, LIMS will allow us to track samples, manage information, and streamline forensic processes more efficiently. This investment is expected to lead to better outcomes in our forensic investigations, benefiting both the Sheriff's Department and the municipal police departments we support.

#### Enhancements in Crime Scene Investigation Operations

We have also made significant improvements to our Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) operations. By implementing new procedures and establishing specific timelines, we have optimized our workflows, enabling our teams to respond more quickly and effectively to crime scenes across the county.

Additionally, through grant funding, we have acquired cutting-edge equipment, such as Alternate Light Source (ALS) lighting for better evidence visibility and Crime-lite x10 for trace evidence detection. We've also added a DFO & Ninhydrin fuming chamber for fingerprint development and Red-Tec Balloon lights for improved visibility during nighttime investigations. These tools bolster our ability to collect and analyze evidence accurately, reinforcing our commitment to high forensic investigation standards and benefiting all law enforcement agencies we serve.

#### Firearms Unit: Acquisition of Comparison Microscope

The Firearms Unit is set to further strengthen its analytical capabilities with the purchase of a state-of-the-art comparison microscope. This equipment will be essential for the meticulous examination of ballistic evidence, allowing forensic experts to compare fired bullets and cartridge cases with greater accuracy. The comparison microscope will enhance our ability to identify and match firearms to specific incidents, leading to more precise investigations and resolutions in firearm-related cases.



Additionally, we have repurposed existing CSI cameras to support the Firearms Unit. By integrating high-resolution imaging technology with firearms analysis, we can capture detailed photographs of ballistic markings, providing a visual reference that enhances our comparison techniques. This combined approach will streamline our processes and ensure that our investigations—whether for the Sheriff’s Department or municipal agencies—are more thorough and reliable.

#### Pursuit of Rapid DNA Technology Funding

Our laboratory is actively seeking funding to implement Rapid DNA technology, a groundbreaking advancement in forensic science that can drastically speed up the process of generating DNA profiles from biological samples. Rapid DNA can deliver results within hours, allowing us to address case backlogs more efficiently and identify suspects in urgent investigations, such as violent crimes and cases of missing persons.

We are preparing comprehensive proposals to secure the necessary funding for this technology, as it has the potential to significantly enhance public safety and improve forensic investigations across the county. Securing this funding is a top priority for crime lab operations, and we are confident that Rapid DNA will be a game-changer for our department’s investigative capabilities.

#### Alcohol Unit Enhancements

The Alcohol Unit has successfully secured funding through grants and support from the Office of Traffic Safety. This funding has allowed us to acquire new intoximeters and alco-sensors, which are critical for conducting DUI investigations.

Additionally, the alco-sensors will enhance our field capabilities, allowing officers across the county to perform roadside evaluations more effectively. These advancements ensure that we are equipped with the most up-to-date and reliable tools for investigating DUI cases.



## Looking Ahead

We are proud of our strides within the Scientific Investigations Division. These advancements not only enhance the capabilities of our department but also provide essential support to municipal police departments throughout San Bernardino County. From improving crime scene investigations to seeking out new tools like Rapid DNA, we remain committed to upholding public safety and delivering justice through innovative and efficient forensic processes across our region.

## **Frank Bland Regional Training Center**

Since its founding in 1971, the Frank Bland Regional Training Center has been at the forefront of law enforcement training, not only for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department but also for officers across the state. Recognized as a leader in progressive law enforcement education by the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), the training center staff trains thousands of law enforcement officers each year from various agencies.

Our high standards, professionalism, and commitment to excellence have made the Frank Bland Regional Training Center a sought-after facility for training. Agencies from across the county and the state rely on us to deliver the most relevant, cutting-edge tactics and technology, preparing today's officers for the challenges of tomorrow.

## Expansion and New Training Facilities

The training center continues to grow and innovate, introducing new facilities and programs to further enhance law enforcement training in the region. Our commitment to staying at the forefront of law enforcement education means continuously investing in state-of-the-art technology and modern tactics.

## New K-9 Training Facility

One of the latest additions to the Frank Bland Training Center is the Regional Canine Training Facility, designed to train both the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department





canines and those of allied agencies. The bond between a handler and their canine is crucial for fieldwork, akin to the trust and understanding between a parent and child. This facility provides a quiet, safe, and secure environment where handlers and their canines can hone their skills, which are perishable if not practiced regularly.

Funded by federal grants from the American Rescue Plan Act alongside Department funds, this facility highlights our department's commitment to supporting canine programs across the Inland Empire. It serves as a training hub for law enforcement canines, ensuring the safety of both officers and the public.

### Sheriff's Memorial Park

The Sheriff's Memorial Park creation was a key priority for the department because it aligns with his commitment to honoring the legacy and sacrifices of those who have served the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. The Memorial Park serves as a place of remembrance and a tangible reminder of the values that define the department—service, sacrifice, and community. For Sheriff Dicus, ensuring that the stories of fallen deputies, volunteers, and professional staff are preserved was crucial to maintaining a strong connection between the department's history and its future.

By placing the Memorial Park on the Academy grounds, we emphasized the importance of integrating this legacy into the training and development of future deputies. This setting allows new recruits to reflect on the contributions of their predecessors and instills a sense of duty and respect from the very beginning of their careers. It is essential that the lessons of courage and dedication continue to inspire the next generation.

Additionally, the park provides a space where families, current deputies, and retirees can privately honor and remember their loved ones and colleagues. This level of accessibility was intentional, as we recognize the importance of having a place where the entire department community can come together to reflect and heal in a private setting.



The ability to host the annual county peace officer memorial at this site further demonstrates our vision for the park as not only a place of personal reflection but also a location for public commemoration. It reinforces the department's dedication to remembering those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, ensuring that their legacies continue to be honored both within the department and by the broader community.

On November 9, 2021, we broke ground on the park and had it completed in 6 months at The Law Enforcement Memorial unveiling ceremony on May 19, 2022, followed by the Volunteer Memorial Unveiling Ceremony on April 27, 2024, and the Professional Staff Unveiling Ceremony on May 1, 2024.

### Scenario Village

We are excited to announce the upcoming construction of the Scenario Village at the Frank Bland Regional Training Center, set to begin in July 2025. Although there is no identified completion date, the area is already graded and prepped for infrastructure, including curbing, drainage, and electrical/data conduit.

The Scenario Village will replicate a small city, complete with houses, businesses, a school, a hotel, a church, and apartments. It will be used for Basic Academy practical scenario testing, Advanced Officer courses, and SWAT training. Buildings will be constructed using retrofitted sea containers with facades to resemble residential and commercial structures. The village will include curbs, gutters, sidewalks, streetlights, and traffic signals, providing a realistic training environment that prepares our officers for real-world situations.

### Emergency Vehicle Operations Center (EVOC)

Our Emergency Vehicle Operations Center (EVOC) remains one of the premier driver training facilities in the nation. Since 2021, EVOC has trained over 10,000 officers and deputies from more than 100 federal, state, county, and municipal agencies, including



Florida, Colorado, and Montana law enforcement personnel. In addition to providing POST-mandated Basic Driver Training for our academy, we also serve the County of Orange, Riverside County, Long Beach Police Department, and Rio Hondo academies. EVOC's training reach extends to fire departments and emergency agencies, including the Pasadena Fire Department, which recently trained all 160 personnel at the facility.

Two significant construction projects are currently underway at EVOC. The first involves addressing water leaks caused by rain, including complete plywood and stucco re-clad, with completion expected by February 2025. The second project focuses on resurfacing all asphalt areas, improving stadium lighting, and adding a signal-controlled intersection, with completion anticipated by September 2025. These improvements will ensure that EVOC remains a world-class facility for law enforcement and emergency vehicle operations.

### Conclusion

The department is proud of the continuous growth and innovation at the Frank Bland Regional Training Center. Our investment in new facilities like the K-9 Training Facility, Scenario Village, and ongoing improvements at EVOC reflects our commitment to excellence in law enforcement training. These enhancements will ensure that we continue to prepare our deputies—and those from agencies across the state—with the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to protect our communities and meet the challenges of modern law enforcement.

### **Coroner Division**

The Coroner Division of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department carries a complex and essential responsibility. Under state law, the Coroner Division is required to investigate and determine the circumstances, manner, and cause of death for cases that fall within its jurisdiction. These include suspected homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, and natural deaths where no physician is available or legally permitted to sign the death certificate. Additionally, the division investigates certain other mandated causes of death.



Over the years, we've faced significant challenges in maintaining the specialized workforce needed for this important role, but we're proud to say we are now stronger than ever.

### Overcoming Workforce Challenges in Forensic Pathology

Up until December 2021, the Coroner Division employed only three full-time forensic pathologists. However, the workload was overwhelming, and it became clear that we needed to grow our team to maintain the quality of service expected by our community.

Recognizing the importance of this specialized field, we embarked on a focused hiring campaign over the past three years. Thanks to the leadership of Chief Pathologist Brian Hutchins and the department's support, we were successful not only in attracting top talent but also in retaining those professionals. As of August 2024, we have a fully staffed team of eight full-time forensic pathologists and two part-time pathologists.

This is a major achievement, especially given the national shortage of forensic pathologists. Across the United States, there are currently around 500 practicing board-certified forensic pathologists, yet the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) recommends that approximately 1,280 are needed to meet the demand based on workload standards. With only a small number of individuals training and becoming board-certified in forensic pathology each year, finding the right professionals has been a challenge for coroner divisions nationwide.

### Establishing a Forensic Pathology Fellowship Program

In April 2024, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Coroner Division, in collaboration with Loma Linda University Medical Center, secured the second accredited Forensic Pathology Fellowship program in the state of California. This fellowship program, set to begin in 2025, is an incredible milestone, as we are currently the only Sheriff-Coroner Division in the U.S. to host an accredited Forensic Pathology program. This initiative is



designed to train the next generation of forensic pathologists, ensuring that we not only meet current demands but also prepare for the future.

### Educating Future Pathologists and Supporting Growth

The division is also expanding its educational mission. Starting in the Fall of 2024, the Coroner Division will collaborate with the Loma Linda University Pathologist Assistants Program, giving students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience during their Coroner rotation. This partnership highlights our commitment to supporting future professionals and investing in long-term growth.

A fully staffed team means we are now positioned not only to handle current case volumes but also to manage future increases without overburdening our staff. By reducing excessive overtime and ensuring long-term stability, we are creating a more efficient and resilient division. This forward-thinking approach improves public perception and helps us maintain the high standards our community expects.

### Conclusion

Thanks to the hard work of our team and the continued support from the department, the San Bernardino County Coroner Division is now one of the few fully staffed divisions in the state of California. Having a complete team of forensic pathologists allows us to offer more comprehensive and reliable death investigation services to the community.

Our division is not only better equipped for day-to-day operations but is also prepared to grow and evolve with future demands. By strengthening our workforce and investing in educational initiatives, we ensure that the Coroner Division remains a trusted and essential part of public safety in San Bernardino County for years to come.



## Investment in Technology

The Information Services Division (ISD) plays a crucial role in supporting the mission of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. ISD is responsible for managing critical systems such as criminal records, public safety dispatching, and technological services that enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of the department. In today's fast-paced environment, the ability to manage information quickly and accurately is essential to our success in maintaining public safety and upholding the law.

### Information Services Division: Core Components

The ISD consists of several key units, each of which performs essential functions that keep the department operating at the highest standards of efficiency and effectiveness:

- Communications Unit: As the heart of our public safety operations, the Communications Unit provides dispatch services for our department and for contract city jurisdictions. The unit may also extend dispatch services to other agencies, such as school police departments. Ensuring the rapid and accurate deployment of our personnel in response to 9-1-1 calls and emergencies is one of the unit's highest priorities.
- Customer Service Unit: As explained in previous sections, this unit was created to alleviate the pressure on in-person reporting by offering alternative reporting methods. Co-located with dispatch and records, this unit allows the public to report crimes via phone, utilizing new and existing technologies to enhance the public's access to law enforcement services.
- Records Unit: The backbone of our department's administrative operations, the Records Unit manages criminal records, teletype functions, and warrant operations. This unit ensures that all data is processed accurately and in compliance with regulations, playing a vital role in maintaining law enforcement records.



- Technical Services Unit: This unit is tasked with maintaining and developing the department's technological infrastructure. From computers and software systems to internet solutions, the Technical Services Unit ensures that our department stays at the forefront of technological innovation. This includes specialized programs that support both our internal operations and our interactions with the community.

### National Threat Operations Center Partnership

In February 2024, our department took another major step forward in enhancing information-sharing capabilities through a partnership with the FBI's National Threat Operations Center (NTOC). This partnership is designed to improve collaboration across federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies, as well as private sector partners. The initiative streamlines the sharing of critical threat information in real-time, enhancing situational awareness and supporting the timely prevention of threats such as terrorism and cybercrime.

By leveraging the latest technology, the NTOC partnership has enabled our department to improve the speed and accuracy of information dissemination, ensuring that we are always prepared to respond to potential threats to the safety and security of our county.

### Communications Division: Managing Public Safety Calls and Responding to Network Disruptions

The Communications Division operates two main dispatch centers, the Desert Control Center (DCC) and the Valley Control Center (VCC), both of which serve as the primary 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) for their respective regions. These dispatch centers form the core of our emergency response infrastructure, employing a dedicated team of 218 personnel, including 189 dispatchers, 22 supervisors, two managers, plus a captain and 2 lieutenants.

In 2023 alone, the division handled:



- 428,651 emergency 9-1-1 calls
- 1,841 Text-to-911 sessions
- A total of 1,619,668 calls

This volume of calls demonstrates the Communications Division's critical role in ensuring public safety throughout the county.

In April 2023, the department experienced a significant challenge when a cyberattack disrupted operations. Despite the gravity of the situation, both DCC and VCC continued to provide high levels of service through the professionalism and adaptability of their staff. While one center faced a longer disruption, the management team, in collaboration with other support divisions, implemented new workflows to mitigate the impact of the attack. For nearly 30 days, these teams operated with reduced system access but maintained their commitment to public safety through innovation and hard work.

#### Records Unit: The Backbone of Law Enforcement Operations

The Records Unit, which includes 50 dedicated positions, plays a vital role in maintaining law enforcement operations and public safety. Despite the challenges posed by the 2023 cyberattack, the unit continued its essential work with the support of our County's Information and Technology Department, as well as the Ontario Police Department and Riverside County Sheriff's Department.

During this time, the unit established an interim manual reporting process to comply with the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) guidelines, ensuring we continued to meet the requirements of PC 13020. The unit also trained around 130 staff members in this process, demonstrating remarkable resilience and adaptability under pressure.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Records Unit managed an impressive workload, including:

- 77,447 teletype messages/requests





- 20,400 correspondences
- 9,948 Livescan submissions
- 6,892 law enforcement background checks
- 1,951 Public Records Act requests
- 137 U Visas

Additionally, the unit developed a new Records Retention Policy in line with updated County standards, further enhancing its ability to manage and maintain critical law enforcement data.

#### Adapting and Innovating for the Future

The department is proud of the extraordinary work being done by the ISD and its various components. Their ability to maintain operations in the face of adversity, such as the cyberattack of 2023, speaks volumes about the dedication and professionalism of our staff. ISD is a cornerstone of our department's success, from dispatching critical calls to ensuring that our records and technical systems remain operational.

The partnership with the FBI's NTOC highlights our commitment to staying at the forefront of law enforcement innovation. By enhancing our ability to share and analyze information, we are better equipped to prevent and respond to various threats.

The Information Services Division remains critical to our department's ability to fulfill its mission. As we continue to modernize and improve our systems, we are confident that ISD will remain an essential component of our efforts to provide the highest level of service to the residents of San Bernardino County.

#### Satellite Phone Utilization: Enhancing Communication During Emergencies

The need for reliable, resilient, and versatile communication systems is critical in maintaining public safety and operational efficiency during disasters. In recent years, we



have taken significant steps toward improving our department's emergency communication capabilities, particularly through the use of satellite (SAT) phones and Starlink satellite systems.

Since 2016, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has maintained an allotment of SAT phones across several of our stations, including the Office of the Sheriff. These phones were initially purchased as a backup communication system in the event that landlines and cell towers became inoperable during a natural disaster or other emergency. Over the years, the need for alternative communication solutions has grown, prompting the department to increase its inventory of SAT phones.

In 2022, we took our preparedness a step further by conducting our first department-wide disaster training, coinciding with California's statewide "The Great Shakeout" exercise. This training allowed us to test our communication systems and highlighted several areas for improvement. One major finding was that the department had multiple models of SAT phones, each requiring different operating procedures. While the phones enabled our station commanders to communicate with their deputy chiefs, the volume of incoming calls quickly overwhelmed the Executive Staff, affecting their ability to make timely decisions—an issue that could be detrimental in a real-world crisis.

Additionally, we found that SAT phones require an open, unobstructed outdoor environment to operate effectively. This limitation posed challenges for personnel handling sensitive information, who often had to move into unsecured areas to make calls. Furthermore, the inability of SAT phones to support group calls restricted the department's capacity to coordinate large-scale responses during an emergency.

Following the second Great Shakeout in December 2023, we conducted another review of our emergency communication protocols. This review revealed that several stations, correctional facilities, and even some Office of the Sheriff positions were lacking their own



dedicated SAT phones. To address this, for fiscal year 2024/2025, we have authorized the purchase of additional SAT phones to ensure that every station, division, and executive staff member has access to these critical tools. This will enhance one-on-one communication and ensure greater operational efficiency during disasters.

### The Introduction of Starlink Satellite Systems: A Leap in Communication Capabilities

While SAT phones have proven valuable in maintaining one-on-one communication during emergencies, they are limited in their ability to support group calls or transmit data via the Internet. To overcome these limitations, the department has begun incorporating Starlink satellite systems into our emergency response protocols. Since 2022, the Emergency Operations Division has utilized multiple Starlink units, which are portable satellite dishes providing reliable internet access in the field.

These systems have been especially useful for our Search and Rescue and emergency management teams, enabling them to maintain connectivity even when traditional communication lines are down. Although Starlink is not ideal for secure data transmission, it allows access to secure web-based programs already in use by department members, facilitating situational awareness and critical infrastructure management. The ability to access these secure platforms is essential in maintaining operational continuity during disasters, particularly when it comes to coordinating resources and capturing vital intelligence.

Recognizing the importance of these systems, the department has authorized the purchase of additional Starlink satellite units for each station and division in the department. By incorporating these units into our Emergency Operating Protocols, we are significantly enhancing our department's capacity to respond to catastrophic events that may disable traditional communication infrastructure. Not only do these units provide reliable internet access, but they also enable Wi-Fi calling from standard cell phones, further expanding our communication capabilities.



### Looking Ahead: A Commitment to Resilient Communication Systems

We understand the critical importance of communication during emergencies. Our recent improvements to our SAT phone systems and the addition of Starlink technology ensure that we are prepared for a wide range of scenarios. Whether we are dealing with a natural disaster, a large-scale technological failure, or any other crisis, these systems will allow us to maintain operational efficiency and communicate effectively with our teams and other agencies.

Moving forward, we will continue to evaluate and refine our emergency protocols, ensuring that our department has the tools and resources it needs to protect the people of San Bernardino County. By leveraging the latest satellite technologies, we are better equipped than ever to respond swiftly and effectively in times of crisis.



## SECTION 4: CRIMINAL OPERATIONS

The Criminal Operations of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department plays a crucial role in maintaining public safety through a combination of strategic enforcement, specialized investigations, and rapid response capabilities. At the core of these efforts is a commitment to public trust, communication, and community engagement, made possible by our Public Affairs Division and Information Exchange programs. By fostering open dialogue with the public and ensuring accurate dissemination of information, we strengthen trust and build lasting relationships between law enforcement and the communities we serve.

Our Specialized Enforcement Division (SED) tackles high-risk incidents, including fugitive apprehensions and tactical responses, while our Specialized Investigations Division focuses on solving complex cases like homicides and investigating lethal force encounters, ensuring justice is served. The Emergency Operations Division, through our accredited Aviation Unit, provides critical support in search and rescue, firefighting, and law enforcement missions across the vast terrain of San Bernardino County.



Together, these divisions embody our department's dedication to excellence, ensuring that every aspect of our operations—from public outreach to specialized law enforcement—is executed with professionalism, accountability, and the safety of our community in mind.

## Public Affairs

One of the core priorities of the Department has been to improve communication and public trust. Through the dedicated efforts of our Public Affairs Division, we have made significant strides in achieving this goal. From the relaunch of our Sheriff's newsletter to creating new platforms for public engagement, our Public Affairs Division is essential in strengthening the bond between the department and the communities we serve.

### The Sheriff's News Brief: Strengthening Internal and External Communication

In September 2023, we relaunched the Sheriff's News Brief, reviving it in both internal and external versions. Internally, the newsletter serves as an invaluable tool for keeping all department members—sworn and non-sworn—connected to the mission and activities of the department.

With more than 3,500 personnel, it's crucial that our employees stay informed about significant events, department achievements, and the stories of our members. This internal communication fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose throughout the department, allowing us to celebrate our collective accomplishments.

Externally, the newsletter serves a broader purpose: it delivers timely and relevant information directly to the residents of San Bernardino County. With a distribution reaching approximately 339,000 community members, the external newsletter highlights local events, department news, and key initiatives that impact our communities. Most importantly, it allows us to clarify media interpretations and share the Sheriff's message directly with the public, ensuring accurate information is conveyed about important issues affecting our county.



### Public Trust Initiatives and Communication

In February 2024, we took another crucial step toward enhancing public trust by adding a dedicated section to our website [page](#). This new section, developed in compliance with Assembly Bill 2761 and Senate Bills 1421 and 16, provides the public with critical information about in-custody deaths, personnel records, and reports related to use-of-force incidents, sexual assaults, and acts of dishonesty. These legislative mandates are not just obligations; they are part of our larger commitment to being open and accountable to the public.

To ensure public trust and set the tone for accurate public understanding, our Public Affairs Division worked closely with our Specialized Investigations – Homicide Division and Body-Worn Camera Division. Together, they produced Critical Incident Videos that provide real-time information about incidents falling under SB 1421 and SB 16. These videos allow us to convey clear, fact-based narratives, ensuring that the public receives firsthand information about critical incidents unfiltered by media interpretations. This direct communication helps us build trust with the community, showing that we are committed to public trust and accountability in all our operations.

### Community Engagement: Building Trust Through Dialogue

The strength of our relationship with the community is paramount. To foster collaboration, we have built upon the original Information Exchange Committee, created by former Sheriff Gary Penrod, which brought together leaders from businesses, community stakeholders, and faith-based organizations to engage in open dialogue with the Sheriff's Department.

This platform continues to be an essential avenue for communication between the department and the community, allowing us to address concerns, share updates, and build partnerships.



In response to the events following the tragic death of George Floyd in 2020, our department recognized the need for more inclusive and focused community engagement—particularly with younger generations. Then Assistant Sheriff Lana Tomlin led the initiative to create the Next Generation (Next-Gen) branch of the Information Exchange, specifically designed for young adults aged 16 to 35. Many of the protests and social movements during this time were led by younger individuals who felt disconnected from law enforcement. We saw this as an opportunity to bridge that gap and ensure inclusion and diversity were included in the information exchange program.

The Next-Gen meetings focus on an open dialogue regarding current events, use-of-force policies, community policing, and the department's discipline processes. A key component of these meetings is the small group discussions led by deputies, which foster organic, transparent conversations and allow young adults to express their concerns directly to law enforcement officers. This approach has been pivotal in building trust and ensuring that our younger community members feel heard and engaged. By opening these lines of communication, we have strengthened our connection to the next generation and furthered our mission of fostering trust between law enforcement and the community.

#### Community Relations: Strengthening Public Trust

The role of the Community Relations Officer (CRO) has become a vital part of our department's public engagement efforts. Working directly with the Office of the Sheriff, the CRO helps manage public perceptions, engage with the community, and build relationships with key stakeholders. Whether attending events with the Sheriff, fostering relationships with community groups, or managing our social media platforms, the CRO ensures that the department's message is clear, accurate, and aligned with our commitment to public service.

The CRO is also crucial in organizing and coordinating the Sheriff's Information Exchange Committee meetings. These meetings are instrumental in informing community leaders about legislative issues impacting public safety, providing updates on critical incidents, and





discussing relevant policy changes. By establishing and maintaining strong relationships with local government agencies, educational institutions, and service clubs, the CRO ensures that our department remains engaged and responsive to the community's needs.

### Looking Forward: Expanding Public Affairs and Community Trust

As we continue to expand our Public Affairs Division's efforts, our focus remains on increasing public trust, improving communication, and fostering stronger relationships with the community. Whether through the newsletter, direct public outreach, or the work of our Community Relations Officer, we are committed to ensuring that the Sheriff's Department remains accessible, accountable, and transparent to the people of San Bernardino County.

The department is proud of what we have done to enhance communication and public trust, and we remain committed to furthering these efforts in the years ahead. By building trust, fostering open dialogue, and providing accurate information, we will ensure that the residents of San Bernardino County can have confidence in their Sheriff's Department and the work we do to keep them safe.

## **Specialized Enforcement Division**

The Specialized Enforcement Division (SED) plays a critical role in supporting patrol stations, handling fugitive investigations, and responding to high-risk incidents, such as arson, explosive-related crimes, and natural disasters. SED also provides dignitary protection, ensuring a high level of safety and expertise in the field. The division is staffed with 38 full-time sworn personnel, 24 ancillary sworn personnel, three medical professionals, three reserve deputies, and three professional staff.

The SED SWAT team, comprising 30 full-time sworn operators, is structured into four tactical teams with a dedicated training cadre. These highly trained operators specialize in key tactical disciplines, which include:

- Long Rifle Team



- Chemical Agent Grenadier
- Breacher / Explosive Expertise
- Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) / Robotics Technology
- Apprehension K9 Handler
- Rope Access Team
- Tactical Emergency Medical Support (TEMS)

The SWAT team's primary workload focuses on fugitive apprehension and supporting law enforcement agencies countywide in investigating and apprehending violent criminals. These operations often exceed regular patrol capabilities, and our team's specialized training and equipment allow them to resolve critical incidents swiftly and safely.

In collaboration with the United States Marshals Service, SED operators are also cross-sworn as US Marshals Task Force Officers under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This partnership leverages the strengths of both organizations, giving the Marshals access to our local knowledge and expertise while providing SED with federal resources and investigative tools to tackle the most dangerous fugitives within San Bernardino County.

#### SED Apprehension K9 Program

In 2022, the department implemented the SED apprehension K9 program to provide additional less-lethal and de-escalation options when dealing with violent suspects. Our K9 handlers and dogs are trained to operate in high-risk operations, such as hostage situations, barricaded suspects, and tactical searches, providing a safer and more efficient resolution to these incidents.

The deployment of K9s in SWAT operations offers several advantages. These K9s possess a highly developed sense of smell and hearing, which makes them extremely effective at locating suspects and identifying hidden threats. Moreover, the psychological impact of a



barking K9 has proven effective in gaining compliance from suspects during multiple incidents.

Our team currently includes four K9s:

- K9 Ace
- K9 Boris
- K9 Bruno
- K9 Zara

Each handler undergoes a six-week basic handler school and completes a minimum of 16 hours of training monthly, exceeding POST standards with approximately 24 hours of training per month. Our K9s, all Belgian Malinois, are selected for their intelligence, agility, and drive, making them ideal for law enforcement operations.

The psychological impact of a barking K9 has proven invaluable in gaining compliance from suspects. Several incidents have demonstrated how the presence of a K9 can de-escalate potentially dangerous situations. For example:

- In January 2023, SED personnel assisted the Victor Valley Station with a high-risk search warrant for a wanted murder suspect in Lucerne Valley. The suspect was known to possess firearms and made threats to shoot deputies if they attempted to arrest him. During the service of the search warrant, the suspect exited the residence and was noncompliant with verbal commands. K9 Zara was focused on the suspect and barked at him. The suspect became compliant and was safely taken into custody without further incident. The suspect later told SED personnel he would do whatever they told him to do because he did not want to get bit.
- In February 2024, SED personnel assisted the Rancho Cucamonga Station with an armed barricaded suspect. The suspect was involved in a domestic violence incident with the victim, where the suspect pointed a gun at the victim. Postings on the suspect's social media showed the suspect with a gang affiliation and in possession of



firearms. The suspect refused to exit his residence and surrender to deputies. SED personnel breached the front door and deployed less-lethal munitions through several windows to gain the suspect's compliance. The suspect still refused to surrender. The suspect surrendered when he heard K9 Bruno barking. Several firearms were recovered inside the location. The suspect later admitted he was not going to surrender; however, he reconsidered once he heard the K9 because he did not want to get bit.

- In May 2024, SED personnel assisted the Victorville Station with the service of a high-risk search warrant at the home of a suspect wanted for terrorist threats with a firearm. During the search warrant, K9 Ace was positioned near the rear of the residence when the suspect and another occupant attempted to escape out the back. Upon seeing Ace, they stopped, complied with verbal commands, and surrendered.
- In August 2024, K9 Ace's presence alone led a wanted suspect in Victorville to surrender without incident.

These successes highlight the critical role the K9 program plays in ensuring the safety of both officers and the public.

#### K9 Program Statistics (2022-2024)

Since the inception of the SED K9 program, the following results have been achieved:

- Arrests: 123
- Use of Force Incidents: 10
- Searches Conducted: 75
- Peaceful Surrenders: 448
- Outside Agency Assists: 15

#### Community Engagement

At SED, we value the importance of community support. Each year, we actively participate in events such as Cops for Kids, the Special Olympics Polar Plunge, and National Night Out.



These engagements allow the public to interact with our team, learn about our equipment, and better understand our role in public safety.

Since 2022, SED has participated in:

- 2022: 18 community events
- 2023: 29 community events
- 2024: 29 community events

Through these efforts, we aim to build trust and foster stronger relationships with our community.

The Specialized Enforcement Division continues to be a cornerstone of our department, providing critical support to patrol stations and specialized units. Whether it's apprehending fugitives, handling high-risk incidents, or engaging with the community, SED remains committed to protecting and serving the citizens of San Bernardino County.

## **Specialized Investigations Division**

The Specialized Investigations Division plays a critical role in ensuring public safety by conducting in-depth, focused investigations into complex and serious cases such as homicides and lethal force encounters (LFEs). With a dedicated team of investigators and advanced resources, this division is responsible for solving cases that require specialized expertise, from high-profile murders to officer-involved incidents. The division's work is essential not only for solving crimes but also for maintaining community trust and ensuring that justice is served.



Homicide Investigations and Solve Rate

Year	Homicides	Homicide Solve Rate
2022	75	73.33%
2023	54	84.91%
2024	45	73.33%

Between January 1, 2022, and September 19, 2024, the Homicide Detail investigated a total of 174 homicides. The investigation of homicides is one of the most

demanding tasks, requiring careful analysis of evidence, cooperation with witnesses, and often the use of forensic and electronic resources to build strong cases.

- In 2022, there were 75 homicides investigated, with a 73.33% solve rate (55 homicides solved).
- In 2023, the number of homicides dropped by 27% to 54 cases, with investigators solving 45 of those cases, resulting in an 84.91% solve rate.
- So far in 2024, 45 homicides have been investigated, with 33 cases solved (73.33% solve rate).

The circumstances surrounding each homicide greatly affect the solvability of the case. Factors such as witness availability and the presence of physical or forensic evidence play a pivotal role in determining the success of the investigation. A homicide is considered solved when a suspect has been identified and arrested, a warrant has been issued for their arrest, or the suspect has been identified and is deceased.

Cases that remain unsolved after exhausting all apparent leads are reassigned to the Cold Case Detail. Since 2022, this detail has successfully made arrests in 21 cold case homicides, averaging seven arrests per year. These ongoing reviews ensure that no unsolved homicide is forgotten, and cases are continually reexamined as new leads develop.

Lethal Force Encounters

From January 1, 2022, to September 19, 2024, the Homicide Detail also investigated 53 lethal force encounters (LFEs). An LFE is defined as any use of force by law enforcement that



results in, or is likely to result in, great bodily injury or death to another person, including situations where shots are fired but do not strike the suspect. These investigations are critical for ensuring accountability within the department.

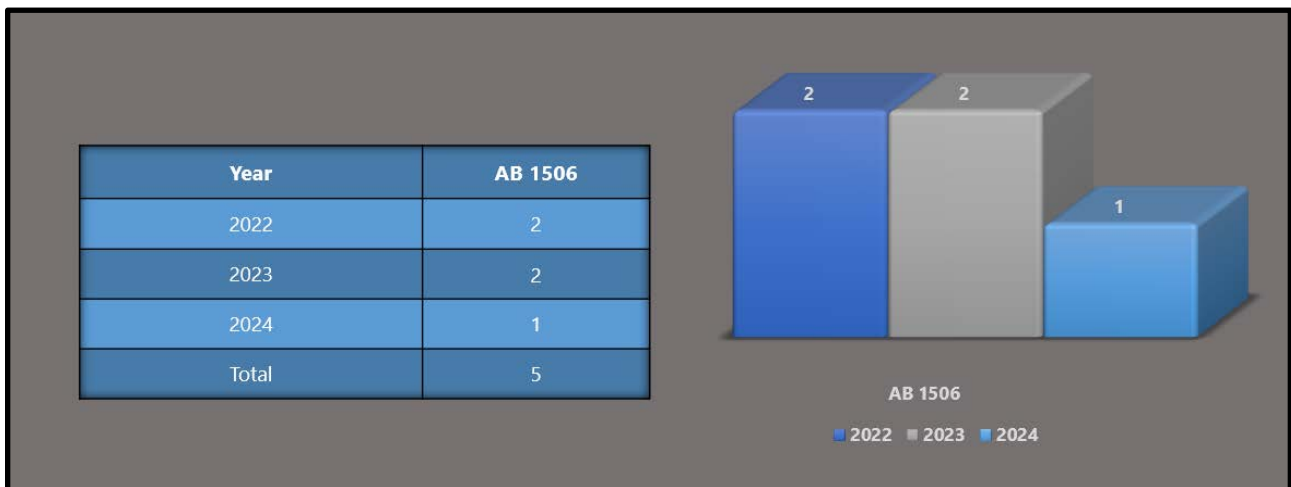
All LFE investigations are thoroughly examined and submitted to the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office for review; they also sent our DA Investigators to assist with the investigation.



*\*2024 is year to date (9/30/24)*

AB 1506 (PC 12525.3)

Following the implementation of Assembly Bill (AB) 1506 on July 1, 2021, the California Department of Justice (DOJ) is required to investigate all officer-involved shootings (OIS) that result in the death of an unarmed civilian. The DOJ's California Police Shooting





Investigation Team (CaPSIT) works closely with local law enforcement agencies from the beginning to the conclusion of each investigation.

*\*2024 is year to date (9/30/24)*

From January 1, 2022, to September 19, 2024, the Homicide Detail handled five LFEs that qualified as AB 1506 cases. In April 2024, the DOJ published a [report](#) on one such investigation involving an LFE from June 21, 2022. The DOJ concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support a criminal prosecution. The other four AB 1506 cases are still pending as of release of this report.

### Notable Cases

The Homicide Detail's work includes several high-profile and complex investigations. Some notable cases include:

- January 23, 2024: The Homicide Detail investigated a mass murder involving six victims in a rural area of the High Desert. After a five-day investigation, detectives successfully identified and arrested five suspects responsible for the murders.
- September 15, 2023: Detectives worked on the kidnapping for ransom of a 17-year-old Highland resident. Through collaboration with the FBI and the use of various investigative resources, the Homicide Detail located the juvenile in Central California, leading to his rescue. Two suspects were subsequently arrested.
- November 1, 2022: The murder of a 15-year-old student at a Halloween party posed significant challenges. After a five-month investigation, detectives identified a suspect and secured a warrant for his arrest. The suspect was apprehended on April 25, 2023, at the San Ysidro port of entry as he attempted to return to the United States.

### Conclusion

The work of the Specialized Investigations Division continues to demonstrate its critical importance to public safety and justice in San Bernardino County. With a focus on solving complex homicide cases, investigating lethal force encounters, and ensuring that justice is





served, the division remains at the forefront of law enforcement excellence. The division's high solve rates, successful cold case investigations, and dedication to public trust set a standard for professionalism and public trust.

## **Emergency Operations Division**

The Emergency Operations Division of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department plays a crucial role in public safety, offering support across various missions, including law enforcement, search and rescue, and firefighting. Given the vast size and diverse terrain of San Bernardino County—covering 20,105 square miles, including mountainous regions—our aviation team faces unique challenges. Ensuring the safety and effectiveness of our pilots and operations is paramount, which is why, in September 2022, we began the process of pursuing accreditation from the Airborne Public Safety Accreditation Commission (APSAC). This accreditation serves as a measure of operational excellence and reinforces our commitment to public safety and professionalism.

### The APSAC Accreditation Process

APSAC provides accreditation services to aviation units to certify their compliance with the highest professional standards, emphasizing safety as the top priority. The accreditation process includes several phases: an application, a self-assessment, an on-site assessment, a commission review, and the ongoing process of maintaining compliance. This program aims to ensure safe, efficient, and accident-free aviation operations in support of public safety missions.

In September 2022, the Sheriff's Department directed the Aviation Unit to apply for accreditation in all three areas offered by APSAC: Airborne Law Enforcement, Aerial Firefighting, and Airborne Search and Rescue. This was part of our commitment to ensuring that the Aviation Unit continues to operate at the highest level of safety and effectiveness.



### Final Accreditation and Recognition

On March 21, 2024, the APSAC Board of Commissioners met to review the assessors' recommendations, along with our self-assessment and operational documents. At the conclusion of their review, APSAC awarded the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Aviation Unit with accreditation in Airborne Law Enforcement, Aerial Firefighting, and Airborne Search and Rescue. This achievement marks us as the only aviation unit in the United States accredited in all three areas.

In August 2024, Aviation Unit leadership was invited to the Airborne Public Safety Association Conference in Houston, Texas, where they were formally presented with a plaque recognizing our full accreditation. This accreditation ensures that our Aviation Unit is operating at the highest level of safety and professionalism, reinforcing our reputation both within the law enforcement community and the broader public safety industry.

### Expanded Air Support Capabilities with new Bell 412 EPX Helicopters

The Sheriff's Aviation Unit, part of the Emergency Operations Division, recently received two new Bell 412 EPX medium-lift, twin-engine helicopters. While these helicopters are primarily designed for search and rescue (SAR) missions, they are multi-mission capable and can be deployed for medical transport, aerial firefighting, SWAT (Specialized Enforcement Detail) operations, and personnel transportation. The Bell 412 EPX offers enhanced payload capacity, improved performance in high-altitude and high-temperature environments, and extended range compared to the department's previous aircraft.

Each helicopter is equipped with advanced technology, including a moving map, a high-definition day/night camera system with infrared capability, a searchlight, a rescue hoist, and a belly tank for firefighting. These new helicopters replace the aging single-engine Bell UH-1 (Huey) helicopters, built in 1968 and 1971, which no longer meet modern performance and safety standards.



On average, the Sheriff's Aviation Unit responds to around 200 search and rescue missions annually, many involving hoist rescues in difficult, high-elevation terrains. Since entering service in May 2024, the new Bell 412 EPX helicopters have already been used in 11 successful hoist rescues.

As part of the Emergency Operations Division, the Sheriff's Aviation Unit operates a fleet of 18 aircraft, enabling it to carry out its wide range of critical missions efficiently.

### Conclusion

With the addition of the new Bell 412 EPX helicopters, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Aviation Unit continues strengthening its position as a leader in public safety aviation. These state-of-the-art helicopters enhance our ability to carry out critical missions, including search and rescue, aerial firefighting, and medical transport, with improved performance and safety.

With this accreditation, the Aviation Unit is now one of only seven agencies in the United States to undergo the rigorous APSAC evaluation process. More importantly, we remain the only agency accredited in all three key areas: Airborne Law Enforcement, Aerial Firefighting, and Airborne Search and Rescue. This distinction highlights our dedication to exceeding industry standards and ensuring that our operations are conducted with the highest levels of safety and effectiveness.

The new Bell 412 EPX helicopters, equipped with advanced technology and enhanced capabilities, further solidify our commitment to providing vital services such as narcotics surveillance, personnel transport, wildland fire suppression, and emergency medical transport. We are incredibly proud of this accomplishment and confident that these additions will only enhance our ability to serve the residents of San Bernardino County with unparalleled safety and excellence.



## SECTION 5: DETENTION AND CORRECTIONS BUREAU

The Corrections and Rehabilitation Operations Bureau of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is dedicated to maintaining the safety, security, and rehabilitation of those in our custody. With a focus on modernization, community integration, and comprehensive care, we have undertaken several key initiatives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our correctional facilities.

One major milestone is the remodeling of the Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center, which has been upgraded to provide a more effective environment for inmate rehabilitation, incorporating modernized facilities and expanded programs aimed at reducing recidivism. Additionally, we have established the Community Service and Reentry Division to strengthen our efforts in preparing inmates for successful reintegration into society. This division offers critical services such as educational programs, vocational training, and life-skills development, ensuring that individuals have the tools they need to rebuild their lives post-incarceration.



The High Desert Detention Center is now fully staffed, a significant achievement that allows us to ensure the facility's smooth operation, from daily security functions to providing comprehensive inmate services. Our commitment to safety is unwavering, as we have implemented enhanced security protocols throughout all our jails. This includes continuous safety measures in both the general population and the medical sections of our facilities to ensure the well-being of inmates and staff alike.

Through these efforts, the Corrections and Rehabilitation Operations Bureau remains focused on providing secure and humane detention while promoting rehabilitation and reducing recidivism, all while safeguarding the health and safety of our staff and those in our custody.

### **Remodel of Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center**

In July 2024, the Office of the Sheriff decided to temporarily close the Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center (GHRC) to address staffing needs at other facilities and complete long-needed facility upgrades. This temporary closure is a necessary step toward improving the working conditions for our staff and the living conditions for the inmates housed at GHRC. By redistributing staff and tackling critical facility upgrades, we are investing in the future of GHRC, ensuring that it continues to play a vital role in rehabilitation and reentry services for years to come.

Even during the temporary closure, critical functions at GHRC will remain operational. The Bakery, which is responsible for producing inmate bread products, will continue its operations with the inmate worker crews being transported to and from the facility. Additionally, the Work Release/Electronic Confinement Program will remain staffed and continue to function as normal.



The remodel and temporary closure of Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center represents an important investment in the future of this facility. Whether we pursue a reentry program or expand inmate housing, the planned upgrades will enhance safety, security, and operational efficiency. The department is committed to ensuring that the Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center remains a vital part of our corrections system, offering essential services that support rehabilitation, reentry, and public safety.

## **Establishment of the Community Service and Reentry Division**

In July 2021, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department launched the Community Service and Reentry Division (CSRSD) as part of our ongoing effort to better serve the county's most vulnerable populations. By merging the Inmate Services Unit (ISU), Work Release/ECP Unit, and all Department outreach and in-reach teams under a single command, CSRSD was designed to provide a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation, reentry, and support for those affected by incarceration, homelessness, and untreated mental illness.

Since its inception, CSRSD staffing has increased significantly, reflecting the growing demand for the vital services it offers. Sheriff's Department staffing within CSRSD has grown from 27 to 47 personnel, while jail-based contract staffing has increased from 52 to 66 employees. The community-based outreach and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) staffing has also expanded from 18 to 22 positions.

### CSRSD's Mission and Focus Areas

CSRSD focuses on rehabilitation, education, support, and advocacy for vulnerable populations. The division provides services to the incarcerated, those reentering the community from the county correctional system, and individuals facing homelessness or untreated mental illness.

In collaboration with government agencies and community-based organizations, CSRSD delivers services that are crucial to improving the quality of life for these individuals. The division is comprised of two distinct units:



- Inmate Services Unit (ISU)
- Outreach and Community Service Unit

Each unit plays a critical role in fulfilling the mission of CSRSD, addressing the needs of those affected by the justice system and connecting them with the resources and support they need for successful reintegration into society.

### Key Accomplishments Since Inception

Since its launch in July 2021, CSRSD has made significant strides in expanding and improving services for the community. Below are some key milestones and initiatives that demonstrate the division's forward momentum:

- Expansion of HOPE Teams: CSRSD added two additional positions to the Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (HOPE) teams, establishing one team for the desert region and another for the valley.
- START Team Growth: The Sheriff's Transitional Assistance Reentry Team (START) was expanded by adding one deputy sheriff and one Social Worker II to enhance its services.
- AIM Program Development: CSRSD developed and launched the Acute Incarceration Management (AIM) program, designed to address the needs of high-utilizer populations in the correctional system.
- Laura's Law Protocols: In collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and partner agencies, CSRSD developed the county's Laura's Law protocols, which were officially launched as a program.
- Community Outreach and Support Team (COAST): CSRSD introduced the county's first COAST to provide outreach and support services to those experiencing homelessness and untreated mental illness within our jurisdiction.
- Operation Shelter Me: Using earmarked funds and community concerns funding, Operation Shelter Me was launched to provide assistance to the county's most



vulnerable unhoused residents. To date, 22 Operation Shelter Me events have been conducted across the county.

- InnROADS Expansion: The InnROADS program, which works with the homeless population, was expanded in collaboration with DBH and partner agencies, including the addition of licensed psychiatric staff and four DBH Clinical Therapists to the team.
- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training: The CIT team, a collaboration between the Sheriff's Department and DBH, expanded its training offerings to include tribal law enforcement agencies, agencies in neighboring counties, code enforcement agencies, and community groups.

#### Advancements in Inmate Education and Vocational Training

CSRSD's Inmate Services Unit (ISU) has focused heavily on improving education and vocational opportunities for incarcerated individuals. Some of the most notable accomplishments include:

- Increased High School Education Opportunities: The number of high school teachers in the jail system was increased, resulting in a 348% increase in the number of incarcerated high school education participants and a 640% increase in the number of graduates.
- Project Music Heals Us: This innovative program was introduced as an elective high school course, bringing music education into the jail system at no cost to the county.
- ROP Vocational Training Expansion: ROP vocational training programs were expanded to all county jails, increasing the number of ROP teachers from 3 to 8. Additionally, teaching expenses were shifted from the county to state schools funding, reducing costs.
- FAITHS Program Growth: The FAITHS partnership grew from 10 to 16 staff, and an additional university was added as an intern provider. Student participation in FAITHS programming increased by 436%, and a community site was obtained to continue FAITHS programming post-release, offering services to out-of-custody justice-involved individuals.





- Love 4 Literacy Program: Launched in partnership with the Superintendent of Schools, this program focuses on improving literacy among incarcerated individuals.

### Awards and Recognitions

The Community Service and Reentry Division (CSRSD) has been recognized for its excellence and innovation in programming. Among its many awards are:

- Three National Association of Counties (NACo) Awards
- One California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Award
- One Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Council Award
- The CSRSD/FAITHS partnership was one of only 10 agencies nationwide selected by the Department of Justice, Council of State Governments as a criminal justice behavioral health learning site in recognition of innovative, evidence-based psychotherapeutic programming offered by FAITHS.

These accolades are a testament to the impact of ISU programming and its dedication to providing high-quality services to the incarcerated population.

### Conclusion

Since its establishment in 2021, the Community Service and Reentry Division (CSRSD) has proven to be a vital part of the Sheriff's Department's mission to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations. By expanding its services and strengthening partnerships with community organizations, CSRSD is helping individuals rebuild their lives through education, reentry programs, and support services.

The department is committed to ensuring that CSRSD continues to grow and serve the people of San Bernardino County, helping to break the cycle of incarceration and provide hope and opportunity for those who need it most.



## Full Staffing of High Desert Detention Center

The High Desert Detention Center (HDDC) has played a key role in the Bureau's ability to manage inmate populations since its initial opening in 2006. Originally comprised of only two dormitory housing units (Units 1 and 2), HDDC has since expanded significantly to meet the evolving needs of our correctional system. The facility's growth has been instrumental in addressing capacity challenges and enhancing our ability to manage inmate housing in line with classification needs.

### Expansion and New Facilities

In December 2010, we broke ground on a major expansion project in Adelanto, and by February 6, 2014, the facility had more than tripled its capacity. The addition of six new housing units brought Adelanto's maximum capacity to 2,134 inmates, creating much-needed space to accommodate growing inmate populations.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, only two of the older dormitory units and three of the newer housing units were regularly occupied. However, the pandemic forced us to reconfigure inmate housing to institute social distancing measures. During this time, we closed the two older dormitories (Units 1 and 2) and fully opened all six newer housing units due to their cell-style layout, which provided better isolation and protection from virus transmission.

### Post-COVID Adjustments and Full Occupancy

As the threat of COVID-19 receded, the expanded housing units remained open due to ongoing inmate population growth and classification needs. By late 2022 and early 2023, we reoccupied one of the older dormitory units, leaving seven units in operation.

In August 2023, we completed the transition of female inmates from the Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center (GHRC) into the final vacant dormitory unit at High Desert, marking the facility's full occupancy for the first time. This move was part of a broader effort to optimize housing across our detention facilities.



### Staffing Increases to Support Expansion

In 2023, the Bureau made significant staffing adjustments to support the full operation of the High Desert Detention Center (HDDC). This included the addition of:

- One lieutenant
- Five sergeants
- One corporal
- Twenty deputies
- Ten custody specialists

These additional personnel were crucial for the complete opening of the facility, allowing us to better manage inmate populations while ensuring the safety and security of both inmates and staff.

### Reorganization of Bureau Housing

In 2024, the Bureau implemented a major reorganization of its inmate housing strategy, consolidating operations into three of the four facilities. This reorganization has allowed us to reallocate staff and resources more efficiently, with significant cost savings as a result. Among the projected savings, the Bureau forecasts over \$6 million in overtime reductions due to the reallocation of personnel and operational efficiencies gained through the consolidation.

### Conclusion

The expansion and full occupancy of the High Desert Detention Center have marked a significant milestone in the Bureau's efforts to meet the growing needs of inmate housing. By fully utilizing all available units and implementing staffing increases, the facility is now better equipped to handle its maximum capacity. Coupled with strategic reorganization efforts and cost-saving measures at other facilities, these changes demonstrate our ongoing commitment to operating efficiently while maintaining the highest standards of inmate care and security.



## Safety Measures in County Jails

In 2022, the Detention and Corrections Bureau began researching innovative technologies to enhance security and prevent contraband from entering detention facilities. These efforts focused on minimizing invasive searches and improving detection methods. By 2023, the Bureau awarded a contract to provide seven body scanners across in the jail, a critical step in reducing the smuggling of weapons and narcotics hidden in body cavities. These scanners, similar to those used in airports, have transformed the security process within our jails.

### Deployment of Body Scanners and Results

In August 2024, two scanners were installed and placed into service at both the West Valley Detention Center (WVDC) and the High Desert Detention Center (HDDC). Shortly thereafter, a third scanner was installed at WVDC, and one at the Central Detention Center (CDC). Since installation, the scanners have been instrumental in recovering significant quantities of concealed narcotics, weapons, and even handcuff keys. This technology marks a substantial advancement in our ability to intercept contraband and keep both staff and inmates safe.

### Additional Interdiction Tools

To complement the body scanners, the Bureau also introduced Drug Loo portable contraband toilets in 2024. These toilets allow for the humane recovery of narcotics naturally passed by inmates during contraband watch processes, further bolstering interdiction efforts.

Since 2021, full-time narcotics interdiction K-9 teams have also been deployed to conduct searches in inmate living areas, resulting in the recovery of hidden narcotics. Specialized jail investigators have disrupted numerous attempts to smuggle drugs into the facility, including the interception of illicit mail and sophisticated drone delivery attempts.



### Narcan Administration and Statistics

In response to the rise of opioid overdoses, every deputy assigned to the Bureau received training in Narcan administration during the 2022-2023 training cycle. Narcan has proven to be a life-saving tool. In 2023, Bureau staff administered Narcan 61 times, with 59 inmates making a full recovery. By 2024, Narcan was used 72 times, with 70 full recoveries. These statistics highlight the Bureau's proactive approach to opioid-related incidents, as overdose deaths have decreased within our facilities, despite an increase in opioid-related fatalities in the broader community.

### Force Incident Data and Mitigation Strategies

The Bureau began tracking statistical data related to use-of-force incidents in 2018. By categorizing incidents based on their severity, the Bureau has been able to monitor trends and make necessary adjustments. Over the years, several measures have been taken to mitigate force incidents, including the development of the Corrections Force Investigation Team (CFIT) in 2023.

CFIT, comprised of sergeants with specialized investigations and training backgrounds, evaluates force incidents for policy compliance and training needs. Their analysis has led to specific improvements, such as the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aimed at reducing force during the booking process and during suicide watch searches. Since these SOPs were implemented in April 2024, there have been no force incidents related to these processes.

### Investigations of Inmate Deaths and New Legislation

The Bureau has continuously refined its investigation processes, especially regarding in-custody death (ICD) investigations. In 2022, the process was enhanced to include collaborative reviews within a week of an incident, involving input from homicide investigators, medical and mental health staff, and facility administration. In 2023, the California Legislature and Governor approved new mandates on the Board of State and



Community Corrections (BSCC) creating a new investigation process for ICDs, which the Bureau's procedure already met, with only slight modifications to reporting requirements.

#### Facility Security Improvements and Technology Upgrades

The Bureau has also invested in significant security enhancements across its facilities. In 2023, the Bureau began upgrading security camera systems, improving video quality, extending retention periods, and reducing blind spots. Additionally, improvements were made to Human Machine Interfaces (HMI), which control facility doors, cameras, and inmate communication systems.

The West Valley Detention Center also launched a test project to automate the intake and booking process, increasing efficiency and accuracy in 2023. By September 2024, the project entered Phase 2, automating booking and release processes across the entire Bureau.

#### Teleconferencing and Facility Enhancements

As part of ongoing improvements, the Bureau is in the process of installing secure teleconference booths in housing units, equipped with audio and video capabilities. Initially, these booths are being used to facilitate communication between inmates and the Public Defender's Office, with plans to expand their use to include medical and mental health services.

#### Staff and Inmate Safety Initiatives

Since 2021, the Bureau has focused on reducing inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-staff assaults. Collaborative efforts between custody staff, Corrections Classification Unit (CCU), and mental health professionals have contributed to a decrease in these incidents. Although 2024 data is still being compiled, early indicators suggest that this year will see a significant reduction in assaults compared to previous years.



In 2024, the Bureau also implemented a more robust data tracking model to not only identify trends but also analyze the root causes, allowing for quicker corrective actions to be taken where necessary.

### Conclusion

Through the introduction of advanced technologies, updated SOPs, and an ongoing commitment to staff training, the Detention and Corrections Bureau has made significant strides in improving safety, security, and operational efficiency. Whether it's the deployment of body scanners, the reduction of force incidents, or the enhancement of inmate health and safety measures, the Bureau remains focused on maintaining the highest standards of correctional management and public safety.

### **Body Worn Camera Deployment in Jails**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is committed to expanding its body-worn camera program following the successful implementation of phase one, which saw patrol deputies equipped with the devices. As part of phase two, the department will introduce an additional 700 body-worn cameras for deputies working in the county's four Type II correctional facilities. This phase of the project is made possible through community concerns funding, obtained with the assistance of Congresswoman Young Kim, and is scheduled to begin in 2025.

To support the expanded use of body-worn cameras, the department will be implementing an advanced digital evidence platform that enables the efficient storage, retrieval, and analysis of recorded footage. This platform will streamline the handling of digital evidence, ensuring that footage is readily accessible for investigations and court proceedings. The integration of this platform represents a significant step forward in modernizing the department's technological capabilities and improving public trust and accountability within its facilities.



The Technical Services Division (TSD) will play a key role in this expansion by upgrading and installing the necessary infrastructure, including body-worn camera docking stations. This infrastructure upgrade will ensure that the newly deployed cameras are fully operational and integrated with the department's digital evidence systems. TSD's work is crucial in ensuring the smooth transition into phase two, allowing deputies in correctional facilities to benefit from the same technological advancements that have already enhanced public trust in the department's patrol operations.

### **Consent Decree with the Prison Law Office**

In 2018, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department entered into a landmark settlement agreement with the Prison Law Office following a lawsuit that was filed in 2016. This lawsuit raised serious concerns about inmate conditions, particularly at the West Valley Detention Center, including claims of substandard medical, mental health, and dental care, use of force by, and violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The five-year remedial plan outlined in the settlement required the Sheriff's Department to undertake comprehensive reforms, addressing not only healthcare but also use-of-force protocols, ADA compliance, and overall inmate welfare.

After years of dedicated efforts, the Sheriff's Department reached a critical milestone in July 2024, when U.S. District Court Judge Jesus G. Bernal approved an agreement stating that the department was in substantial compliance with the court's mandates related to medical care in the jails. This led to removing court-appointed experts from overseeing inmate medical care, signifying that the department had met the required standards in this area. This success follows lifting oversight for dental care and restricted housing in September 2023, further indicating the department's commitment to continuous improvement. Although external monitoring continues in the areas of mental health care, use of force, and ADA compliance, the progress made under the consent decree is significant and points to a reformed correctional environment that embraces better care for inmates while maintaining public safety.





The reforms required by the settlement led to increased staffing in key areas, improved healthcare protocols, and the introduction of mental health services that better meet the needs of the inmate population. Today, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is recognized as having made significant strides in improving conditions and fostering a safer, more humane environment in its facilities, with ongoing collaboration to ensure compliance with remaining provisions.

#### Financial Benefits and Risk Mitigation for Taxpayers

The successful implementation of the 2018 settlement agreement has resulted in significant cost savings for San Bernardino County taxpayers. One of the most immediate benefits of meeting the compliance standards is reducing the risk of future litigation. Prior to the reforms, the department and all other correctional facilities were frequently targeted by lawsuits related to accusations of inmate mistreatment, resulting in millions of dollars in settlements.

Administrative and legislative policies from the State, including Proposition 47, Proposition 57, and Assembly Bill 109, moved several violent inmates from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and brought them to local correctional facilities. These facilities were never built and intended to house the level of inmates for the length of time and the level of potential violence. Because of these state policies, the Sheriff's Department and San Bernardino County have been required to invest heavily in the restructuring and staffing of our correctional facilities.

By addressing the root causes of these issues through improved inmate care and better oversight, the Sheriff's Department has successfully mitigated the risk of costly legal challenges going forward.



Furthermore, the investments made to improve medical, dental, and mental health care and other aspects of jail management have reduced the likelihood of non-compliance with state and federal regulations. This helps the county avoid potential penalties and costly interventions by external agencies. By ensuring that the conditions within the jails meet legal standards, the department is reducing the immediate risk of lawsuits and preventing long-term liabilities that could have drained county resources. This proactive approach is a win for both the department and the public, ensuring fiscal responsibility while enhancing public safety.

#### Commitment to Inmate Safety and Humane Treatment

The Sheriff's Department's work with the Prison Law Office has highlighted its commitment to the safe and humane treatment of inmates within its custody. One of the key aspects of the 2018 settlement was the improvement of mental health care services for inmates, a critical area given the high number of individuals with untreated or undiagnosed mental health issues entering the correctional system. The department has made significant progress in expanding mental health services, including adding additional mental health professionals and creating specific housing units designed to address the needs of vulnerable inmates. This ensures that those with mental health conditions are provided with the care they need while in custody, reducing the risk of harm to both the inmates and the staff.

Additionally, reforms under the settlement required improvements to ADA compliance, ensuring that inmates with disabilities are appropriately housed and provided reasonable accommodations. This has included modifications to the physical infrastructure of the jails and the implementation of new protocols for the intake process to ensure that inmates with disabilities are identified and provided necessary support from the moment they enter custody. Such reforms not only ensure legal compliance but also create a safer environment where all inmates are treated with dignity and respect.



The reduction in the use of force by deputies, driven by improved training and oversight, has also been a significant outcome of the reform efforts. The department's updated use-of-force policies reflect a more balanced and measured approach, with a focus on de-escalation techniques and appropriate responses to inmate behavior. This has led to a marked decrease in incidents of unnecessary force and has contributed to a safer environment for both inmates and corrections staff.

### Conclusion: A Safer and More Efficient Correctional System

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has made remarkable progress under the terms of the 2018 settlement agreement with the Prison Law Office. By addressing the key issues raised in the lawsuit, the department has not only improved the conditions for inmates but also reduced the risk of costly legal challenges, ultimately saving taxpayers millions of dollars. As the department continues to make strides in mental health care, use-of-force management, and ADA compliance, it reaffirms its commitment to operating a correctional system that is safe, humane, and accountable. This ongoing collaboration with the Prison Law Office reflects a broader shift towards reform and public trust, ensuring that inmates are treated with the respect they deserve while under the department's custody.

### **Homelessness and Mental Health**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, has been proactively addressing the growing crisis of homelessness and mental health challenges that have overwhelmed communities across the county. California faces an unprecedented homeless crisis, with the state accounting for 30% of the country's homeless population despite representing only 12% of the total U.S. population. In San Bernardino County alone, the homeless population has surged to 4,195, an increase of 80.74% since 2013, according to the 2023 Point-in-Time Count.

The primary causes driving homelessness include mental illness, substance abuse, and the lack of available housing and critical services. Our department, along with our County of San



Bernardino partners, are committed to finding practical and immediate solutions that transcend traditional approaches, proposing initiatives that directly address the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

One such initiative includes repurposing properties, such as correctional facilities, into reentry and supportive housing and crisis centers to provide comprehensive support for individuals experiencing homelessness. These centers would offer critical services, from mental health care to housing support, without the zoning and regulatory delays often faced by new developments.

#### Laura's Law and Care Court Programs

In June of 2023, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors opted into Laura's Law. Laura's Law allows for collaborative court-compelled treatment pathways for the most seriously mentally ill individuals who are treatment resistant, have a history of violence or incarceration, and meet specific criteria defined by law. Sheriff's deputies are commonly the first responders to individuals suffering from severe mental illness, and in collaboration with the Community Service & Reentry Division, each of our patrol stations is working to identify individuals likely to benefit from Laura's Law services. Once identified, CSRD staff worked with the County and partner agencies to encourage the individual to accept voluntary services or initiate processes to move individuals who remain service-resistant into court-compelled treatment pathways. To date, over 50 Laura's Law investigations have been conducted, approximately 40 cases have been referred to DBH for further action, and two individuals have been moved into the court process with conservatorship, the possible outcome if the individual remains non-compliant with treatment.

In addition to Laura's Law, the upcoming Care Court program, expected to be implemented in San Bernardino County in the coming years, offers another avenue to address untreated mental illness. This state initiative will connect individuals with mental health conditions to a court-ordered Care Plan that can last up to 24 months. This program ensures that



individuals struggling with mental health disorders receive the care and treatment they need, reducing the risk of them ending up homeless or involved in the justice system. Both Laura's Law and Care Courts represent innovative solutions that provide structured, legally supported frameworks to ensure that those most in need can access services, even if they cannot voluntarily seek help.

As part of our ongoing commitment to the well-being and safety of our inmate population, the Detention and Corrections Bureau has significantly expanded healthcare and mental health services since July 2021. Through strategic recruitment and adding essential positions, we have ensured that all inmates have access to high-quality medical care, addressing both physical and mental health needs. These efforts reflect our dedication to maintaining a safe and humane environment within our facilities.

## **Homelessness Deaths in San Bernardino County**

Between 2018 and 2023, the number of homeless individuals in the county nearly doubled. During this same period, homeless death rates surged by 331%, increasing from 78 deaths in 2019 to 259 in 2023. In 2019, an average of 1.5 people died on the streets of San Bernardino County each week. By 2023, that number had risen to nearly five per week.

Homeless deaths are classified into broad categories, with accidents — including drug overdoses — consistently being the most common cause. In 2023, blunt force trauma, fentanyl and methamphetamine toxicity emerged as the leading cause of death among the homeless population.

### Proactive Measures and SB43 Implementation

The department is committed to equipping our deputies with the necessary tools to reduce these tragic numbers. All patrol personnel now carry Narcan, enabling them to deliver immediate, life-saving aid to individuals experiencing overdoses. Furthermore, the Sheriff has successfully actively advocated for the implementation of Senate Bill 43 in San



Bernardino County, a full year ahead of the state-mandated timeline with the support of the Board of Supervisors.

SB 43, set to launch on January 1, 2025, expands the definition of "gravely disabled" to include those severely affected by substance use disorders. Managed by the Community Service and Reentry Division, this program will empower our deputies to refer individuals with severe substance use disorders into involuntary treatment when all other interventions have failed.

## **Medical Services in the County Jails**

As part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring the well-being and safety of the inmate population, the Detention and Corrections Bureau has significantly expanded its healthcare and mental health services since July 2021. Through strategic recruitment and the addition of vital positions, we have worked to ensure that all inmates have access to high-quality medical care, addressing both physical and mental health needs. These efforts underscore our dedication to maintaining a safe and humane environment within our facilities.

### Expansion of Healthcare Staffing

Prior to July 2021, the Bureau employed 210 full-time healthcare professionals to serve our inmate population. Through consistent recruitment efforts, including hiring events, the addition of nurses to recruitment teams, and the use of social media, we have increased the number of full-time healthcare professionals to 242. These efforts have resulted in a marked improvement in the Registered Nurse (RN) fill rate, which has risen from approximately 30% to 75%. This increase in staffing ensures that each inmate receives timely and effective medical care.

### Enhancements to ADA Services

To improve services for inmates with disabilities, we expanded the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Team to include additional nursing, recreational therapist, and deputy



positions. This expansion has allowed us to better identify ADA patients during intake and provide reasonable accommodations for their specific needs. The ADA team has also improved communication processes, ensuring that these individuals receive the support they need throughout their stay in our facilities.

### Removal from Prison Law Office Remedial Plan and Medical Service Improvements

The Bureau has made significant strides in improving medical care, leading to the removal of the medical portion of the PLO remedial plan. Key accomplishments include:

- Face-to-face medical evaluations for inmates within 24-48 hours of submitting a medical request.
- Establishment of Detox Housing at West Valley Detention Center (WVDC) to monitor inmates experiencing withdrawal symptoms.
- Implementation of a Medical Triage System for doctor sick call appointments, ensuring patients are seen by a doctor within 24 hours.
- Revamping the intake process to ensure that all health assessments, including mental health evaluations at WVDC, are conducted by Registered Nurses prior to housing.
- Expansion of mental health services at High Desert Detention Center (HDDC), which now accepts suicidal patients and has increased its mental health acuity.
- Opening of the WV Unit 16 Outpatient Housing Unit, which allows for the treatment of more medically acute inmates within the jail, reducing the need to occupy beds in acute hospitals.

Additionally, the Bureau has streamlined medical workflows, including the immediate sign-off of critical lab results and a 10-day sign-off for routine labs. The availability of 24-hour on-call medical providers and the expansion of telehealth services have also improved access to care, decreasing the need to transport inmates to outside medical facilities.



### Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program Expansion

The Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program has continued to expand, providing inmates with necessary medications to manage opioid use disorder and other addiction-related conditions. This program plays a vital role in the rehabilitation process for inmates struggling with substance abuse.

### Improvements in Mental Health and High-Acuity Intake

To better serve inmates with higher medical and mental health needs, the Bureau has established processes for accepting greater medical and mental health acuity at intake, especially at CDC and HDDC. The expansion of Correctional Mental Health Services has included the addition of clinicians, mental health nurses, and psychiatrists, enabling the Bureau to provide more comprehensive mental health care within our jails.

### Communicable Disease Response

The Bureau has been proactive in managing communicable diseases, developing an Enhanced Inmate Protection Plan and an Intake Flow Chart Protocol that significantly improved outcomes for both patients and staff. Other counties have adopted these protocols and are recognized as a model for controlling the spread of the virus within correctional facilities.

### Launch of Early Access and Stabilization Services (EASS)

In September 2022, the Bureau launched the Early Access and Stabilization Services (EASS) program for inmates awaiting entrance into the Jail-Based Competency Treatment (JBCT) program. This program has provided critical mental health stabilization services for inmates in need, helping to bridge the gap before entry into JBCT.

### Collaborative Study for NCCHC Accreditation

As part of our ongoing commitment to achieving the highest standards of correctional healthcare, the Bureau is currently participating in a Harvard Study on National Commission





on Correctional Healthcare (NCCHC) Accreditation. NCCHC is considered the gold standard in correctional healthcare, and we are hopeful to achieve full accreditation at the conclusion of the study.

### Ongoing Training and Quality Improvement

In 2024, the Bureau implemented the Relias Training Platform for medical staff. This platform provides ongoing, peer-reviewed education and training, ensuring that our healthcare team stays current with best practices in correctional healthcare.

The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program has also expanded, allowing for increased data collection and process evaluation to address safety, efficiency, and quality concerns. This program enables the Bureau to monitor workflows, establish proof of practice, and implement necessary improvements across the organization.

### Conclusion

The Detention and Corrections Bureau continues to enhance healthcare services for inmates through increased staffing, improved processes and expanded medical and mental health services. These advancements demonstrate our commitment to providing high-quality, comprehensive care for the inmate population, ensuring their health and well-being throughout their time in custody.

## **Court Services Division**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and security of court proceedings and judicial operations across the county. Our deputies are involved in a variety of collaborative programs that extend beyond courtroom security, offering direct services to vulnerable populations such as the homeless, mentally ill, and veterans. These initiatives, alongside robust security measures, demonstrate our ongoing commitment to maintaining a secure, civil, and service-oriented court system.



### Shelter Treatment Court

In partnership with the San Bernardino County Probation Department and Court Staff, Sheriff's deputies and supervisors from Rancho Cucamonga Court participate in Shelter Treatment Court each month. This innovative program provides essential services to homeless individuals, such as showers, haircuts, and meals, while Judge Uhler hears cases for those who would otherwise lack access to a courthouse.

### Collaborative Treatment Courts

The Rancho Cucamonga Court also collaborates with the Probation Department, mental health professionals, and community organizations such as the Salvation Army to hold Collaborative Treatment Courts for individuals facing substance abuse, mental health challenges, and veterans' issues. Deputies provide essential security, arrest remands, and de-escalate potentially violent situations during these court sessions. Their presence ensures that these important hearings can proceed safely and effectively, fostering rehabilitation and support for vulnerable populations.

### Mock Trials

Each year, the Sheriff's Department supports the San Bernardino County High School Mock Trial Competition, which involves over 450 students from more than 25 high schools. Sheriff's deputies participate in the event by acting as bailiffs, adding realism to the competition and ensuring the safety of all participants. This collaboration, co-sponsored by the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools and the Office of the District Attorney, helps prepare future legal professionals while providing students with a unique and engaging learning experience.

### Centralized Video Court and Pretrial Release Program

At Rancho Cucamonga Court, the Sheriff's Department facilitates the Centralized Video Court system, which uses Cisco technology to conduct video arraignments with the West Valley



and High Desert Detention Centers. This system eliminates the need to transport inmates to courthouses, improving security and efficiency. Sheriff's staff ensure the smooth operation of video hearings, coordinating with TSD and Court Tech staff to quickly resolve any technical issues.

### Rancho Cucamonga Court Security Enhancements

In 2023, the Sheriff's Department worked with the Court Risk and Safety Administrator to upgrade the Rancho Cucamonga Court security camera system. This project involved the installation of 49 new cameras and five workstations, significantly improving coverage and security throughout the courthouse. The enhanced system now provides comprehensive views of the courthouse, ensuring that potential threats can be monitored and addressed more efficiently, all while reducing the need for additional personnel.

### Community Initiatives

The Mental Health Diversion Program is one of many collaborative efforts between the Sheriff's Department, the Probation Department, and the District Attorney's Office. By facilitating judicial review for defendants with mental health disorders, this program encourages treatment over incarceration, promoting rehabilitation and reducing recidivism.

The department also supports numerous community engagement events, such as Bring Your Kid to Work Day, mock trials with law students, and Law Day celebrations, strengthening ties between the community and the justice system.

### Needles Courthouse Reopening

The reopening of the Needles Courthouse in January 2023 marked a significant improvement in court access for the local community. Previously closed since 2010, the courthouse now serves as a vital venue for court proceedings, sparing residents the long travel to Barstow or Victorville. This reopening has improved the community's ability to address legal matters locally and conveniently.



### Response to COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the San Bernardino Justice Center implemented outdoor court proceedings and adjusted court schedules to meet public health requirements. To ensure the safety of all attendees, deputies used electrostatic spraying systems (ESS) to sanitize courtrooms daily, utilizing special chemical disinfectants to minimize the risk of virus transmission.

In 2022, the Sheriff's Department also assisted in the transition of child support courts from Redlands to the Historical Courthouse in San Bernardino, facilitating a successful move despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

### Conclusion

Through a combination of security initiatives, collaborative treatment programs, and community engagement, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department continues to play an integral role in maintaining the safety and security of court operations. Whether it's protecting judges during Shelter Treatment Court, ensuring the smooth operation of video hearings, the department remains committed to upholding justice and serving the community with the highest standards of safety and professionalism.



## SECTION 6: THE FUTURE

### Recruitment and Retainment of Employees

Recruiting for law enforcement in today's landscape presents significant challenges, rooted not only in the competitiveness of the labor market but also in a prevailing public sentiment that is often influenced by negative media portrayals. These portrayals, which sometimes question the nobility and integrity of law enforcement, make it difficult to attract individuals who understand the critical importance and honor associated with protecting and serving our communities. As these narratives continue to shape the perceptions of potential recruits, law enforcement agencies, including the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, are tasked with finding qualified candidates and inspiring them to recognize law enforcement as a calling—a career of purpose and service.



### Adapting to a Competitive Labor Market

The broader labor market is seeing competition across all sectors, and law enforcement is no exception. Every agency across the country is vying for a smaller pool of candidates, many of whom are drawn to other professions that may offer more competitive pay, fewer risks, and a more favorable public image. Yet, despite these challenges, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department remains steadfast in its efforts to recruit top-tier talent who are both capable and committed to the core mission of law enforcement: serving and protecting the public.

In 2024, the department made significant strides to address these recruitment challenges by enhancing its internal processes. The Employee Resources Division (ERD) took a pivotal step in modernizing its background investigation procedures by introducing the eSOPH system. This digital platform significantly reduces the time required to complete background investigations—saving approximately 24 hours of manual work per investigation. This reduction in processing time allows us to onboard new personnel more quickly, ensuring that the department can fill essential roles efficiently while maintaining high standards of vetting and recruitment.

In 2023, the department hired 427 sworn and professional staff, and by mid-2024, 221 new hires had already been added. This is a testament to the resilience of our recruitment efforts in an increasingly challenging market. Moreover, the department initiated approximately 1,300 background investigations within the past year, demonstrating our commitment to thoroughness while still pursuing an expedited hiring process.

### Expanding Recruitment Outreach and Building Partnerships

The SBCSD Recruitment Team has also broadened its efforts to attract diverse and skilled candidates from a variety of sources. The team, which includes 86 part-time and 3 full-time members, continues to expand its presence at recruitment events and through strategic



partnerships. In 2024, the Recruitment Team attended 135 events, ranging from community outreach programs to career fairs at colleges and universities.

Collaboration with educational institutions has been a cornerstone of our recruitment efforts. The department has solidified partnerships with California Baptist University (CBU) and California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) through the Employer Partner Programs for 2024-2025, ensuring a pipeline of new recruits from local academic communities. Additionally, the Community College Consortium, which includes 12 community colleges such as San Bernardino Valley College (SBVC), Victor Valley College (VVC), and Crafton Hills College (CHC), plays a key role in reaching students who may be considering careers in law enforcement.

Recognizing the value of military experience, the Recruitment Team has built relationships with several military programs. Partnerships with SkillBridge (Marines and Navy) and Army PayS allow us to tap into the talents of service members transitioning out of the military, bringing a wealth of discipline, experience, and leadership into law enforcement roles. We are also in the process of joining the P3 program to connect with military reservists, further expanding our recruitment base.

#### Leveraging Technology and Social Media

In an era dominated by digital communication, the department has made significant investments in building a robust online presence to enhance recruitment efforts. The department's recruitment channels on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have seen rapid growth in recent years. These platforms allow us to engage with potential recruits, showcase the diverse and rewarding aspects of law enforcement, and counter some of the negative public narratives that may dissuade potential applicants.

For example, the department's YouTube channel has experienced substantial growth, expanding from 54,928 views in 2021 to over 210,000 views by 2023, enabling us to connect



with a broader audience. Our Instagram presence has also proven successful, with our handle @sbsheriffsjobs attracting 11.5K followers and amassing over 1.3 million impressions in less than a year since its launch in late 2023. Additionally, the department established a Facebook page in 2024 to strategically run advertisements, driving notable engagement with a total reach of 252,062 within just a few months.

To enhance our recruitment messaging, the department has invested in high-quality video equipment and software, enabling us to create engaging content that resonates with a younger audience. This content showcases the diversity within the department and highlights the various career paths available within law enforcement. For example, our “Dumbbells & Deputies” event, which showcased deputies’ physical fitness and commitment to serving the community, attracted considerable attention, resulting in multiple participants applying for positions and receiving conditional job offers.

### Overcoming Public Perception Challenges

One of the most significant obstacles facing law enforcement recruitment today is the public perception of the profession. Negative portrayals in the media, coupled with the widespread public discourse around policing in recent years, have discouraged many from pursuing careers in law enforcement. Yet, the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department remains committed to highlighting the nobility of the profession, the opportunities for growth, and the ability to make a meaningful impact on the community.

The department has taken a proactive approach in its recruitment messaging, emphasizing that law enforcement is about much more than enforcing the law—it is about serving the community, protecting the vulnerable, and making a difference in people's lives every day. Our recruitment campaigns are tailored to counter negative narratives by focusing on the department’s diversity, community engagement, and the vast array of specialized units that offer unique career paths for deputies, from Search and Rescue to Homicide Investigation.





Despite the challenges, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department continues to prioritize recruitment as a top concern. Through robust partnerships, a strengthened digital presence, innovative recruitment events, and a commitment to highlighting the positive aspects of the profession, we are ensuring that our department attracts individuals who are not only qualified but also dedicated to the core values of integrity, service, and honor that define law enforcement.

By focusing on long-term recruitment strategies, modernized processes, and a steadfast commitment to shaping the narrative of law enforcement, we are confident that we can continue to build a workforce that is ready to serve and protect the people of San Bernardino County. Our mission is clear: to find the next generation of law enforcement officers who will carry the badge with pride and continue our legacy of excellence.

### Conclusion

Looking ahead, recruitment will remain one of the most significant challenges for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department in the coming years. As we continue to expand key divisions and fill positions added to meet the growing demands of our community, we must remain vigilant in our efforts to attract and retain qualified personnel. This challenge is compounded by the fact that a significant portion of our current workforce is nearing retirement eligibility. In the next few years, it will be critical to not only replace those leaving the force but also to ensure that new recruits are well-prepared to uphold the standards of service that our department is known for.

We are committed to overcoming these obstacles by continuing our proactive recruitment strategies, building stronger partnerships, and promoting the importance and nobility of a career in law enforcement. By doing so, we will ensure that the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department remains fully staffed with capable, dedicated individuals ready to serve our community.



## Legislative Changes in California

Potential legislative changes in California could significantly impact law enforcement agencies, including the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. As public sentiment continues to shift, many voters' express frustration with so-called "soft-on-crime" policies that have resulted in increased crime rates and reduced accountability for offenders. These concerns are reflected in discussions surrounding ballot propositions and potential reforms that may increase penalties for certain crimes, restrict the ability to release offenders early, and provide more tools for law enforcement to address rising criminal activity.

One notable proposition on the horizon is Proposition 36, which could see significant changes in how non-violent felons are handled in the criminal justice system. If passed, this policy could increase jail populations by allowing local jails to house more offenders rather than sending them to state prisons, which would place additional responsibilities on local law enforcement agencies like the Sheriff's Department and behavioral health systems throughout the state. This is just one example of how changing public sentiment and voter-driven legislation can impact how we maintain public safety.

Public concerns about rising crime rates, increasing homelessness, and the impacts of drug abuse have also driven discussions at the state level about adjusting laws to allow for stricter penalties and tougher enforcement of existing laws.

The Sheriff, the Board of Supervisors, and the Office of the Sheriff have consistently supported legislation and policies that respond directly to the needs and concerns of our community. We believe in ensuring that law enforcement has the tools and authority necessary to maintain public safety and is committed to advocating for policies that reflect the community's demand for accountability and justice. In particular, the department supports legislative changes strengthen our ability to deal with repeat offenders, those committing violent crimes, and individuals whose actions directly endanger the safety of our residents.



California's legislative landscape is complex, and the potential changes on the horizon will require continued vigilance. It is essential to stay informed, advocate for commonsense reforms, and ensure that law enforcement can continue to meet the needs of the community. By working together, we can create a balance between public safety and the protection of individual rights, ensuring that our communities remain safe, prosperous, and secure for all.

## **Federal Administration Changes**

The upcoming November election, with potential changes in Congress and the presidential administration, could bring about significant shifts in policies that will directly impact law enforcement at all levels, including the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. These changes may affect crucial areas such as asset forfeiture laws, the use of drones and artificial intelligence (AI) in policing, and the dynamics of how federal agencies like the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) collaborate with local law enforcement.

One of the most impactful changes could revolve around asset forfeiture laws. In recent years, asset forfeiture—the process by which law enforcement agencies seize assets linked to criminal activities—has been a point of debate in Congress. Depending on which party assumes control of the legislature, we could see tighter restrictions or a reinforcement of these laws. Stricter regulations on asset forfeiture could reduce the Sheriff's Department's ability to seize assets connected to criminal enterprises, limiting an important tool used to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. Conversely, favorable changes could streamline the process, allowing law enforcement to target criminal proceeds more efficiently and use those funds to bolster local public safety initiatives.

Drone technology and artificial intelligence are also areas where federal policy shifts could profoundly affect law enforcement operations. Drones have become invaluable tools for surveillance, search and rescue operations, and crime scene investigations. However, changes in privacy regulations or restrictions on drone usage, particularly at the federal



level, could limit their deployment. Additionally, AI—with its growing role in predictive policing, data analysis, and criminal investigations—may face increased scrutiny depending on the evolving debate around civil liberties and surveillance concerns. Federal decisions on these issues will undoubtedly influence the ways in which the Sheriff's Department adopts and uses these technologies to ensure public safety.

The collaborative relationship between federal and local law enforcement agencies could also see adjustments. Federal agencies like the FBI, DHS, and ATF are vital partners in combatting terrorism, human trafficking, and other major crimes. A new administration or shift in Congressional priorities could reshape how these agencies engage with local law enforcement, potentially impacting information sharing, joint task forces, and overall cooperation. This would be particularly relevant for ongoing operations and investigations within the Inland Empire that rely on federal resources, intelligence, and manpower to be successful.

Furthermore, federal funding is critical for local law enforcement, supporting everything from equipment purchases to training initiatives and specialized programs. Federal grants, such as those through the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other agencies, provide essential financial support for many of the Sheriff's Department's initiatives. Any changes in funding priorities or budgetary restrictions from Washington D.C. could impact the department's ability to maintain these programs or expand new ones. Whether it's funding for body-worn cameras, school safety programs, or counter-terrorism efforts, the allocation of federal monies will play a significant role in how effectively we can continue to serve the community.

The department recognizes that these potential shifts in national policy will directly affect our department's ability to carry out its mission. We are committed to staying engaged with our federal partners and advocating for policies that benefit local law enforcement. By maintaining strong partnerships with federal agencies and keeping a close eye on legislative



developments in Washington D.C., we can ensure that we continue to receive the support and resources necessary to uphold public safety in San Bernardino County.

In the months ahead, we will closely monitor how the political landscape evolves in Washington, D.C. and remain proactive in working with our Congressional representatives to advocate for law enforcement priorities. Whether it involves securing federal funding, adapting to new technologies, or ensuring we have the tools to protect our communities, we will remain dedicated to our mission, no matter the changes ahead.

## **Fusion Center**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department takes pride in its collaborative efforts with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, public safety organizations, and private sector partners. A key example of this collaboration is the Inland Empire Safety and Tribal Regional Analysis Center (STRAC), an intelligence-sharing hub established to collect, integrate, and analyze information to improve regional security. STRAC enables better detection, prevention, and investigation of criminal and terrorist activities by sharing intelligence among participating agencies. This new center is a vital addition to the safety infrastructure of both San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, helping to bridge the gap in resources and capabilities that were previously unaddressed.

The San Bernardino and Riverside County areas are part of the Joint Regional Intelligence Center (JRIC), which encompasses a six-county region. However, because JRIC is based in Norwalk and focuses heavily on Los Angeles County, critical infrastructure and resources in the Inland Empire often receive insufficient attention. Additionally, many JRIC training sessions are held within Los Angeles County, limiting access for agencies located farther east. The lack of proactive outreach and regional deliverables has made it necessary to develop STRAC to better address these deficiencies. STRAC will function as a locally coordinated, all-hazards fusion center, facilitating enhanced communication and resource-sharing among



law enforcement, fire departments, emergency services, and tribal partners in the Inland Empire.

### The Role of STRAC in Regional Safety

STRAC's overarching vision is to establish a unified information-sharing environment, where vetted stakeholders collaborate to identify and analyze trends that pose threats to regional safety and security. STRAC will fill the existing communication and resource allocation gaps, enabling San Bernardino and Riverside Counties to protect their communities more effectively. STRAC's functions include analyzing and sharing intelligence on all crimes and hazards affecting the region and producing timely, relevant analytical products for all stakeholders. These efforts help bridge the divide between public safety agencies, tribal nations, and private sector entities, while also protecting the civil liberties of the community through secure and ethical data-sharing practices.

Some of STRAC's immediate benefits include:

- **Timely Support:** Providing rapid intelligence support to public safety agencies and partners.
- **Improved Training:** Enhancing training programs, including the already established Threat Liaison Officer (TLO) program, to build cohesion across various sectors.
- **Civil Liberties Protection:** Ensuring the protection of citizens' privacy and civil rights in all intelligence-sharing activities.
- **Emergency Operation Center:** The potential to serve as a 24/7 operations center during emergencies.

### Strategic Growth and Challenges

STRAC's initial phases focus on setting up a robust infrastructure to ensure its long-term success. The establishment of a governance board, the determination of a physical location for the fusion center, and the appointment of key personnel, including a director, are vital milestones for its development. As STRAC expands, it aims to hire additional analysts,



improve its technological capabilities, and refine its operational procedures to meet the growing needs of the Inland Empire.

While STRAC has made considerable strides, several challenges remain, including securing ongoing funding and determining personnel allocation from partner agencies. Additionally, STRAC must acquire the necessary technology and equipment to fully equip its analysts and ensure operational readiness. Nonetheless, the San Bernardino Police Department and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department have already committed full-time personnel to STRAC, and other agencies have pledged their support. The allocation of Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) and State Homeland Security Program grants has also provided a solid financial foundation for STRAC's early operations, and the department will continue to advocate equitable increases compared to other regions throughout California.

As STRAC continues to grow and address these challenges, it is well-positioned to become a vital asset in the protection of San Bernardino County and its neighboring regions. The goal of becoming a state-recognized fusion center remains a key focus, as this designation will open up additional federal and state resources and grant funding opportunities, ensuring STRAC's ongoing success in safeguarding the Inland Empire.

### **Homelessness, Substance Abuse, and Mental Health Capacity**

The intersection of homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health is one of the most significant public safety challenges facing San Bernardino County today. In recent years, the region has seen a marked increase in individuals experiencing homelessness, many of whom also struggle with substance abuse or untreated mental health issues. Addressing this crisis requires a multi-faceted approach that not only provides immediate relief but also works toward long-term solutions.

Homelessness in San Bernardino County is often driven by factors such as untreated mental health conditions, economic hardships, and lack of affordable housing. According to the 2023



Point-in-Time Count, our homeless population has grown by over 80% since 2013, with 4,195 individuals currently identified as homeless. This population is often the most vulnerable to the dangers of substance abuse and untreated mental health disorders, which can perpetuate cycles of instability and emergency interventions.

Substance abuse continues to be a driving force behind many of the challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. The availability of illicit substances such as methamphetamines, opioids, and fentanyl has exacerbated the situation, contributing to a higher number of drug-related deaths and overdoses. The Sheriff's Department, through its Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (HOPE) team, has worked tirelessly to provide outreach services, but the demand for treatment far exceeds the available resources. Many individuals in this population refuse voluntary services due to the severity of their addiction or mental health issues, further complicating outreach efforts.

Addressing mental health capacity is critical to solving this crisis. Currently, 46% of homeless individuals identified through the HOPE program suffer from extreme mental health conditions, which include severe depression, schizophrenia, and other untreated mental illnesses. These individuals often cannot navigate the available services on their own, making it vital to expand court-mandated solutions such as Laura's Law and Care Courts, which provide structured, long-term mental health treatment options for those incapable of seeking help independently. The lack of inpatient mental health beds and long-term treatment facilities poses additional challenges, limiting the effectiveness of interventions. Expanding access to mental health services, both within the county's jails and in the community, is essential.

Collaboration between the Sheriff's Department, San Bernardino County Behavioral Health, and other government agencies is essential in providing the necessary resources to combat these interconnected issues. The county's InnROADS program, which combines behavioral health services with rapid response teams, and initiatives such as the START reentry





program, which helps incarcerated individuals transition back into society with access to housing and services, is making strides, but more capacity and funding are needed to meet the growing demand.

Building shelters and crisis centers on county jail property, as well as expanding Detox Housing and other dedicated treatment units within our jails, are potential short-term solutions to alleviate pressure on the county's service infrastructure. These measures will provide a safe and controlled environment for those suffering from addiction and mental health crises and reduce the burden on the justice system.

By expanding service capacity, advocating for more funding, and developing comprehensive treatment solutions, we can take the necessary steps to address homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health in San Bernardino County. Through continued partnership and innovation, we remain committed to reducing the impact of these crises on our community and offering real solutions to those in need.

## **Blue Envelope Program**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is proud to offer the Blue Envelope Program in partnership with nonprofit organizations dedicated to assisting the autism community. This initiative promotes inclusivity and serves as a communication tool designed to enhance interactions between law enforcement and individuals diagnosed with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, dementia, anxiety, or other disabilities that may require additional awareness or accommodations during a law enforcement encounter.

Adopted by numerous agencies nationwide, the Blue Envelope Program reflects our department's commitment to building trust and understanding with the communities we serve. By allowing individuals to easily present a Blue Envelope or display its logo during an interaction with law enforcement or community service personnel, the program ensures that officers are immediately alerted to the need for special considerations.



The Blue Envelope can contain important documents such as identification, contact information, vehicle registration, or proof of insurance, helping to streamline the interaction. Importantly, the program does not involve a registry; participation is entirely voluntary and self-implemented.

## **Collaboration with The Board of Supervisors**

The Sheriff is continuing to be committed to ensuring that our department continues to foster strong, collaborative relationships with the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, our county partners within the Law and Justice Group, and the County. It is through this partnership that we can align our public safety initiatives with the broader goals of the county, ensuring that all agencies work cohesively to meet the evolving needs of our communities.

Together with the Board of Supervisors, we have made significant progress in enhancing public safety infrastructure, improving services, and implementing effective strategies that benefit our residents. The continued collaboration between the Sheriff's Department and various county agencies has allowed us to maximize resources, streamline operations, and deliver critical services more efficiently. Our focus on addressing key issues like mental health, homelessness, and crime reduction has been strengthened through this ongoing teamwork, ensuring we provide solutions that are comprehensive and community-focused.

Additionally, the working relationship between the Sheriff's Department and the ten municipal police departments across San Bernardino County has never been stronger. Our partnership with each of these departments has ensured that we stand united in our mission to protect and serve the public. This collaboration allows us to share intelligence, resources, and strategies, thereby increasing our effectiveness in maintaining peace and safety in all corners of the county.



Moreover, our collaboration with Inland Empire and Southern California law enforcement agencies is crucial to combatting region-wide issues. Whether we're addressing organized crime, gang activity, or cross-border threats, the strength of our partnerships ensures that we are not working in silos but are unified in our approach. These partnerships have allowed us to pool resources and coordinate large-scale operations that benefit not only San Bernardino County but the entire region.

We will continue to champion these critical partnerships with all of our municipal, county, and regional law enforcement and government agencies. Together, we will remain dedicated to improving public safety, fostering trust within the communities we serve, and building a safer, stronger future for San Bernardino County.

## **Continuing the Philanthropic Support of Sheriff's Department Non-Profit Organizations**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department takes pride in its continued support for philanthropic initiatives through several dedicated non-profit organizations. These organizations not only benefit department employees but also extend support to the community at large, focusing on assistance during difficult times, youth development, and fostering community ties.

### Sheriff's Employees Assistance Team (SEAT)

Since its inception in 1993, the Sheriff's Employees Assistance Team (SEAT) has been a vital resource for department employees, volunteers, retirees, and their families. SEAT's mission is to provide emotional, physical, and financial assistance during critical situations, such as major illnesses, home emergencies (like fires), or funeral arrangements.

Throughout its history, SEAT has offered vital support to those facing difficult circumstances, from the moment they are hired through to retirement. The assistance provided often brings



immense relief and gratitude, as SEAT helps alleviate burdens during tough personal times. This ongoing commitment has fostered a sense of community within the department, ensuring that all employees and their families feel supported when they need it most.

### San Bernardino County Sheriff's Rodeo

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Rodeo is a hallmark community event that brings together residents, business owners, local officials, and law enforcement in an atmosphere of fun and camaraderie. As one of the few large-scale events that unite such a diverse group of people, the rodeo strengthens the bonds within the community while promoting positive interactions between citizens and law enforcement.

The financial success of the rodeo has enabled the Sheriff's Department to donate over one million dollars back to the community. These proceeds have been directed toward supporting youth programs, with a focus on nurturing responsible citizens and future leaders. By investing in the youth, the rodeo not only provides entertainment but also builds a stronger foundation for the community's future.

### Sheriff's Athletic Federation

The Sheriff's Athletic Federation (SAF) plays an integral role in promoting physical health, camaraderie, and team spirit among law enforcement personnel. The SAF organizes various athletic events throughout the year, encouraging friendly competition, fitness, and wellness within the department. These activities help foster a sense of unity among employees while promoting the importance of physical health and teamwork.

In addition to internal events, the SAF also engages with the community by hosting public sporting events that allow law enforcement to interact with residents in a positive and relaxed environment. These events not only build trust but also help bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community through mutual respect and shared goals.



## SECTION 7: CONCLUSION

Since I took office, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has undertaken significant efforts to modernize its operations, increase its engagement with the community, and address both historical and emerging challenges. This report has highlighted the transformative projects, the results of major enforcement operations, and the department's enduring commitment to public safety, collaboration, and public trust.

### Accomplishments

The department has seen considerable success across various initiatives that demonstrate its proactive stance on law enforcement. One of the most critical achievements is the department's consistent effort to combat violent crime through operations like Operation Hammer Strike and Operation Consequences. These initiatives not only led to the substantial reduction of illegal marijuana grows but also targeted violent street gangs, narcotics



trafficking, and human trafficking. The success of these operations is reflected in the seizure of large quantities of illegal firearms and drugs and the rescue of human trafficking victims.

Moreover, the accreditation of the Aviation Unit in all three key areas of public safety—Airborne Law Enforcement, Aerial Firefighting, and Airborne Search and Rescue—has further solidified the department's standing as a national leader in specialized law enforcement capabilities.

The department's focus on technological and operational modernization, including the adoption of the Permittium system for CCW permits, has greatly enhanced the efficiency of services provided to the public. This has reduced wait times and allowed for quicker, more efficient processing of applications, demonstrating the department's commitment to both public safety and customer service.

### Challenges

While the department has made substantial strides, challenges remain. The increasing violence in the region, largely attributed to legislative changes such as Proposition 47, has complicated the enforcement of laws regarding theft and drug-related offenses. The reclassification of certain crimes from felonies to misdemeanors has limited law enforcement's ability to address these issues effectively, resulting in higher recidivism rates and a strain on public resources. Additionally, rising homelessness and mental health crises have compounded the difficulty of providing comprehensive community safety.

Recruitment and retention remain significant hurdles for the department as it continues to expand its workforce. The negative public perception of law enforcement has made attracting new talent increasingly difficult despite the department's proactive recruitment strategies and the implementation of modernized background checks.



### Strategic Initiatives

In response to these challenges, the department has pursued a series of strategic initiatives. The creation of the Community Service and Reentry Division (CSRD), which merges several outreach and in-reach programs, underscores the department's commitment to rehabilitation and supporting vulnerable populations. This initiative has grown in scale and has already proven effective in reducing recidivism and providing essential services to those reentering society.

The department's focus on emergency preparedness was tested during the 2023 mountain snowstorm, where the collaborative efforts of the Sheriff's Department and local, state, and federal agencies ensured that critical services were provided to the most affected regions. The lessons learned from this response have been documented in an after-action report that will guide future disaster response efforts.

### Future Commitments

Looking ahead, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department remains committed to enhancing its public safety efforts through continued innovation, collaboration, and community engagement. The department's recruitment strategy will focus on adapting to the competitive labor market while maintaining its high standards of integrity and service. A top priority is ensuring that the department is fully staffed and prepared to face future challenges.

I also look forward to witnessing the evolution of state and federal policies surrounding homelessness, mental health, and public safety. In particular, the potential impact of upcoming ballot initiatives throughout California and the voices of residents in the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Area regions will play a critical role. Early survey sentiments suggest promising developments. I am eager to engage with our lawmakers in Washington, DC, and Sacramento to help shift the criminal justice reform pendulum back toward reasonableness and genuine public safety.



The department will also continue its efforts to combat illegal narcotics and violent crime, particularly through ongoing operations like Operation Smash and Grab, which target organized retail crime. Additionally, the department is focused on expanding its mental health diversion programs and strengthening its partnerships with community organizations to address the root causes of crime and promote rehabilitation.