

Law Enforcement Administrators Coordinating Council

Yolo County



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Yolo County District Attorney and Law Enforcement Partners Announce Strict Enforcement Policies related to Sideshows

(Woodland, CA) –September 28, 2022 - In line with statewide efforts, the Yolo County District Attorney's Office along with local law enforcement leaders announced an enhanced enforcement and prosecution strategy in response to a dramatic rise in the prevalence of illegal street racing, commonly referred to as "sideshows" or "speed contests". This new policy would encourage law enforcement to utilize existing law to impound vehicles associated with both sideshow participants and spectators for the maximum period of 30 days, while also limiting situations in which prosecutors would offer diversion in cases stemming from sideshows.

This announcement comes on the heels of Governor Newsom signing AB 2000 into law, which expands the definition of motor vehicle speed contests to include activities taking place on both highways and off-street parking facilities. In October of 2021, Newsom signed AB 3 into law, which gave courts the discretion to suspend the driver licenses of individuals convicted of speed contests for a period of 90 days up to 6 months.

Since 2020, law enforcement agencies across the state have seen a dramatic rise in sideshow takeovers since the COVID-19 pandemic. Yolo County is no exception. From January of 2022 to date, the West Sacramento Police Department has received 127 calls for service relating to sideshow exhibitions. Chief of Police Rob Strange at the City of West Sacramento wants the community to know that their voices are being heard.

"Sideshow activity, with its complete disregard for safety and disruption, has become the most common concern expressed in our City.

The West Sacramento Police Department recognizes that these sideshows are endangering both lives and property. What used to be infrequent events isolated to the more industrial parts of the city, these sideshow takeovers are growing in scope, frequency, and happening in residential neighborhoods on almost a nightly basis. It demonstrates an absolute disregard for others in the community and presents an immense danger.

Beyond the obvious dangers, it is impacting the sleep of children as they head to school, adults as they prepare for work, and so many others who count on regular sleep as a key part of health and longevity.

West Sacramento Police Chief Rob Strange stated, “With so many tragedies related to sideshow activity occurring around our region, state, and nation, it is no wonder our communities are upset. I am grateful for a community and a District Attorney that care enough to raise these issues and that supports our efforts to hold these offenders accountable. We hope to deter others from participating in this activity before tragedy strikes West Sacramento.”

Yolo County Deputy District Attorney Preston Schaub views these concerns not only from the perspective of a prosecutor, but also as a citizen of West Sacramento. “One of my current assignments in the office is to act as the West Sacramento Community Prosecutor. I was selected for that role because I live in the community and, therefore, I am uniquely situated to work closely with city leadership to respond to issues that impact our city. I can tell you firsthand, that it is sometimes impossible to sleep with my windows open because I can hear tires squealing in the distance practically every night. On my drive to Woodland every morning, I am always finding fresh skid marks from people doing donuts in the intersections the previous night. It affects the quality of life of myself and all West Sacramentans.

Recently, our office has viewed these sorts of misdemeanor offenses as ripe for diversion out of the criminal justice system. However, as public officials we must recognize when the communities we serve demand something different. I make it a point to keep my eye on social media so I can gauge how the community feels about certain issues. I can say with certainty that the community of West Sacramento wants these sideshows to stop. Like most things in the criminal justice system, there is no one size fits all solution to this problem, so law enforcement must be prepared to use every tool necessary while balancing the needs of both the community and offenders. However, public safety always comes first.” District Attorney Jeff Reisig echoed the sentiments of DDA Schaub stating that “We have a commitment to ensuring public safety, and we plan to do everything possible to end this reckless behavior.”

It is not only municipalities that are seeing an uptick in dangerous driving, but the more rural parts of Yolo County are also experiencing an increase in traffic related incidents. Outside of city limits, both the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office and the California Highway Patrol (CHP) respond to serious traffic offenses. Vehicle fatalities in which those agencies responded increased from 14 in 2017 to 24 in 2021.

Yolo County Sheriff Tom Lopez acknowledges that it is unfortunate that his department’s resources must be spent responding to such reckless and selfish behavior. “Enforcing the law in the more remote areas of our county requires a relative few number of deputies to patrol a large geographical area. Every time one of our deputies must respond to reports of a sideshow it detracts from our ability to respond to other calls for service, such as driving under the influence or domestic violence. All too frequently, these sideshow takeovers often lead to pursuits, further endangering offenders, bystanders, other motorists, and our deputies. Engaging in this kind of behavior is certainly one of the more selfish decisions a person can make, and we want to make it clear that it is not going to be tolerated.”

Commander of CHP’s Woodland Office, Ivan Tien, made his department’s position known to anyone thinking of participating in a sideshow. “The CHP does not tolerate any unsafe, aggressive, or illegal driving that endangers the motoring public. The CHP will fully take enforcement action against these dangerous behaviors such as sideshow activities.”

Together, these law enforcement leaders hope to prevent the kinds of tragedies afflicting other communities in California from happening in Yolo County. The kinds of tragedies that have sparked stricter laws and heightened enforcement across the state.