Residents urged to Sign up for AlertOC to get critical information during emergencies

Because September marks National Preparedness Month, public safety officials are urging residents and businesses to prepare for the many hazards that threaten our daily lives and sense of normalcy – most often occurring in Southern California with little to no warning.

Whether it's wildfires due to the state's extended drought, mudslides, floods or massive earthquakes, disasters occur rapidly, forcing evacuations and road closures to neighborhoods.

AlertOC, the County's mass notification system, is a critical link for residents to immediately learn of any required actions, such as evacuating their homes during an imminent fire.

On Thursday Sept. 22, more than two million Orange County residents will receive a call to test AlertOC.

The drill will replicate a large scale, multi-jurisdictional emergency requiring thousands of numbers to be called simultaneously across Orange County's entire region.

This is the seventh annual regional test of the system and will include 26 participating cities as well as the County's unincorporated areas.

The distinctive feature of AlertOC is the ability for individuals to register multiple contact methods and addresses.

Registrations of cell phone and alternate numbers dramatically increase the ability to reach the greatest number of community members within minutes.

This enables landlines, cell phones and e-mail addresses to be incorporated into a single notification system.

Residents can do their part to prepare for emergencies by registering for AlertOC.

The time is now to self-register cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses to be a part of the regional test.

For more information or to register alternate phone numbers or e-mail addresses, visit AlertOC.com.

Costa Mesa police join the fight to combat human trafficking in county

Speaking to a crowd of about 150 spectators in front of City Hall, Police Chief Rob Sharpnack announced that Costa Mesa will join other law enforcement and social services agencies in the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force to crack down on sex trade criminals who are leaving a wake of young victims throughout the county.

“It’s truly an honor for the Costa Mesa Police Department to join this effort,” Chief Sharpnack said as he urged members of the public to report incidents of human trafficking that they may witness through the National Hotline number at 1-888-3737-888. “You can be the one to help a victim find safety and new hope.”

Sharpnack announced that human trafficking is on the increase in Orange County and Costa Mesa Police will assign one full-time officer to the human trafficking detail.

“It’s the second largest criminal enterprise in the world and it is the fastest growing,” Chief Sharpnack said.

https://youtu.be/xEoN2Rc4ZLI

Chief Sharpnack was joined by Mayor Steve Mensinger, Anaheim Police Deputy Chief Julian Harvey, Director of Victim Assistance Programs for Community Services Programs Lita Mercado and District Attorney Tony Rackaukus at a press conference in front of City Hall on Friday morning Sept. 9.

Also in attendance were Councilmembers Katrina Foley and Jim Righeimer and many law enforcement personnel from throughout the county.

“Costa Mesa will do everything in our power to combat human trafficking in our city, as well as support this important regional effort” Mayor Mensinger said.

Mercado’s group, the Community Services Programs based in Santa Ana, cofounded the task force in 2004, which consists of law enforcement personnel from Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Santa Ana, Irvine, the California Highway Patrol, the OC Sheriff, the FBI, Homeland Security, the U.S. Attorney and OC District Attorney office.

Since 2004, the task force has worked to identify the origin of the victims and how they wound up being part of this tragic trend. Only a little more than 20 percent come from Orange County, though much of the trafficking occurs here with the pimps using Beach and Harbor Boulevards as major corridors.

The task force aided and provided assistance to 580 sex and labor trafficking victims.

In addition the task force not only goes after the pimps who

brutalize these young victims and exploit them as sex slaves, but also those who pay to have sex with them.

“We now have the purchasers of sex in our sights,” Anaheim Deputy Chief Harvey said. “We will be looking for you and you will go to jail.”

District Attorney Rackauckus also noted there was an uptick in violence against those kept captive and he provided gruesome details of some of the injuries these young women, and in some cases children, receive. He said that his office has experienced more and more gang members, many from the Fresno area, taking part in these illegal activities and he vowed to put the perpetrators behind bars.

“We are working to get them the longest sentences possible so we can put them out of business,” he said.

Click here for more information and links to data on the OC Human Trafficking Task Force website. And click here for more information on Community Service Programs.

CMPD snares seven offenders in probation compliance operation

Officers from the Costa Mesa Police Department and members of the Orange County Probation Department arrested seven offenders on Thursday Aug. 25 for outstanding arrest warrants,

violations of probation, and/or new criminal law violations.

The two agencies conducted the compliance checks on offenders who are subject to Post-Release Community Supervision as well as subjects with probation gang terms. These checks were designed to locate and audit the activity of local criminal offenders residing within Costa Mesa who are under the supervision of the Orange County Probation Department. Officers attempted 19 residential home checks of offenders and contacted 33 offenders, 10 of which were classified as PRCS/Probation offenders living in Costa Mesa.

Summary of those arrested (names withheld):

Male, 15 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 1800 block of Park Drive

Supervision status: None

Charges: Armed Robbery (warrant obtained/served on Costa Mesa open case)

Female, 33 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 3000 block of Fillmore Way

Supervision: Probation – PRCS

Charges: Probation Violation

Male, 49 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 300 block of Princeton Street

Supervision: Mandatory Supervision

Charges: Probation Violation

Male, 40 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 500 block of Traverse Street

Supervision: None

Charges: Misdemeanor Warrant arrest

Female, 28 years old, of Mission Viejo

Location of arrest: 700 block of Wilson Street

Supervision: None

Charges: Possession of Paraphernalia

Male, 54 years old, of Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 700 block of Wilson Street

Supervision: None

Charges: Possession of Paraphernalia

Male, 48 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 700 block of Wilson Street

Supervision: None

Charges: Misdemeanor Arrest Warrant

The Costa Mesa Police Department will continue to collaborate with the Orange County Probation Department to conduct similar, future compliance checks of PRCS offenders living in the Costa Mesa community.

Chief Sharpnack welcomes

newest officer to the department at swearing-in ceremony

Police Chief Rob Sharpnack on Monday Aug. 29 welcomed Nicholas Dempkowski to the force, the latest police officer to leave another department and join Costa Mesa's men and women in blue.

"This is yet another bright spot for Costa Mesa PD," Sharpnack said as he introduced officer Dempkowski. "Nick is going to be a great addition to our department. He is committed to public service and law enforcement and we are glad to have him aboard."

Attending the swearing in ceremony were Mayor Steve Mensinger and City CEO Tom Hatch as well as several staff members from the Police and Fire Departments and City Hall.

Dempkowski comes to Costa Mesa by way of Fullerton, where he joined that force in 2013 and trained as a K9 officer.

Prior to that, he worked as a reserve officer for the Long Beach Police Department after graduating from the Fullerton College Police Academy. He also has a background in off-road racing.

In addition to Officer Dempkowski, Sharpnack introduced new academy graduate Cory Montgomery as well as three new hires for Communications/Dispatch division, Erin Cedillo, Nydia Robles and Jennifer Rosenberg.

He also congratulated several police officers for the great restraint they showed during an incident on Friday night,

where a man armed with a knife was trying to commit suicide-by-cop. The man was detained safely, despite making threatening gestures toward police.

Sharpnack noted this is a particularly proud time for him as he rebuilds the department with the best and the brightest and bulks up staffing in speciality areas like detectives and community policing.

He thanked the efforts of recruiters such as Sgt. Jerry Hildeman and training assistant Jody Gonzalez for their efforts in bringing in top talent and he commended his officers for doing great work, even in the lean times.

“We have not dropped our service levels at all,” Sharpnack said. “We continue to provide a high level of service to the residents of Costa Mesa.”

New UCI Study Launched to Put a Price on Homelessness

Last week the Association of California Cities, Orange County, announced a new partnership with UC Irvine to study and quantify the costs of homelessness on cities in the county.

The study comes on the heels of a collaborative meeting Assistant CEO Rick Francis participated in with the ACC-OC Working Group on Homeless Issues in which he unveiled Five Pillars, including State Advocacy, Research and Data, Outreach and Sharing, Housing Options and Communications to

Constituents, to combat the problem of homelessness. These Five Pillars were later shared with a countywide group of city leaders in May. Costa Mesa is viewed by many county leaders as a model approach in addressing the complexities of homelessness, and the city has already been using many facets of the Five Pillars.

The UCI study falls under the Research and Data pillar and will analyze a comprehensive set of costs and services provided to the homeless population by cities, agencies, and hospitals. This includes emergency health care services, public safety, administrative services, parks and recreation, mental health services, and a number of other elements along the continuum of care.

The study is expected to be completed by next year and will be a helpful tool in the effort to understand existing costs and that data can be used to better deploy public resources.



Chiefs Take Part in Motor Home Madness Demolition Derby at the Fair

On Thursday Aug. 11, Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano and Chief Rob Sharpnack participated in the Motor Home Madness

Demolition Derby at the 2016 Orange County Fair.

The pair were also joined by Newport Beach Police Chief Jon Lewis. The money raised at the event goes to fund breast cancer awareness.

The first to enter the race was Chief Sharpnack.

Just after 8 p.m. Sharpnack, No. 44 (our department's designated number) entered the arena in a painted black and white RV, with the words police and SWAT painted on the sides and with police lights mounted on the top.

As the crowd cheered and began to get excited No. 51 Chief Stefano entered. Making his way around the arena, Stefano entered in a red and gold RV with flashing lights making a few laps round before parking on the opposite side of Sharpnack.

Before the event began all participants exited their RV's and ran around the arena waving their arms and getting the crowd pumped up. Stefano ran around with two fire extinguishers, which set the crowd off.

Unfortunately, Sharpnack and Stefano got knocked out the first half, but it was an exciting event that offered a fun and light-hearted vibe drew in thousands of spectators.

UPDATE: CMPD Has Located 11-Year-Old Missing Autistic Boy

UPDATE: Costa Mesa Police Department has found 11-year-old Diego Garcia.

The Costa Mesa Police Department is searching for an 11-year old autistic boy.

Monday August 1, 2016, an 11-year old autistic boy named Diego Garcia was reported missing by his parents in Costa Mesa. Earlier this morning, Garcia's parents reported to police they noticed him missing from their apartment, located at 1250 Adams Avenue, shortly before 7 a.m.

Garcia is autistic, however, he has limited communication skills and answers by his first name "Diego." Garcia is not fearful of police or others.

Garcia has no known history of running away, and there is no indication of suspicious circumstances at this time. Orange County Sheriff's Department's helicopter crew, aboard "Duke", assisted with making public address announcements in the surrounding vicinity to attempt to locate the child.

OCSD's bloodhound search team also assisted officers on scene at the location.

Diego Garcia is 4 foot 11 inches tall, weighs about 110 pounds and has long brown hair. He was last seen wearing a green shirt, black shorts and red sandals.

He has no immediate means of accessing transportation. CMPD officers and detectives are actively seeking the public's assistance to help immediately locate Garcia.

Anyone with possible information should contact CMPD Dispatch at 714-754-5252.

Police Foot Patrols Welcomed by Residents and Businesses

As part of the department's Community Oriented Policing efforts, Costa Mesa officers are expanding a new foot patrol unit that has been having success with eliminating loitering and other issues associated with homeless and transients on 19th Street and the Westside.

Now officers are taking those successes to the Eastside and walking the beat along 17th Street between Newport Boulevard and Santa Ana Avenue.

One recent Friday, officers, Slawek Luczkiewicz, June Jeong, Katrina Cover and Sgt. Bang Le walked through local shopping centers and strip malls, ensuring that transients were not loitering or sleeping there.

"We never have done a full scale foot patrol in the city," Chief Rob Sharpnack said. "It goes to the heart of Community Oriented Policing. The officers are excited about it and we will look for ways to make it more effective."

The new foot patrol dovetails with other community policing efforts such as the bike patrol, where officers are using creative ways to be more visible and get out of the patrol cars. And the 19th Street and 17th Street corridors are great places for the patrols in particular because of the density of businesses and residents.

The idea sprang forward as Chief Sharpnack was brainstorming with his command staff about ways to improve the police department's community approach.

Lt. Joyce LaPointe was the main advocate for the foot patrols, Sharpnack said.

The officers are making a lot of progress, LaPointe said. What started out as an idea to help businesses in the community has expanded to also helping the homeless and letting them know where they can and can't be. And the response from the community, businesses and officers has been largely positive.

"Overall I've been getting a lot of good feedback from officers," LaPointe said. "It has brought back that old traditional feeling of being a cop and being in the community. I've been really pleased with the response."

Chief Sharpnack said he's heard the same positive feedback from his officers.

"What I'm hearing is the officers think it's another opportunity for them to get out and interact with members of the public," Chief Sharpnack said. "They develop a bond with residents and business owners."

Orange County DA Rackauckus says state measures and laws are contributing to crime spike

Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckus told a Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce breakfast crowd that state laws that make it harder for law enforcement to put criminals in jail are bad news for communities where crime is now on the rise

and he warned that similar laws could be passed in November.

Speaking to chamber members gathered at the Costa Mesa Country Club, Rackauckus decried the passage of AB 109, which allows early release of those convicted of so-called victimless crimes and Proposition 47, a statewide measure that reclassified a whole list of felonies to misdemeanors.

“It’s a big problem and it’s a growing problem,” Rackauckus said of the spike in the number of offenders who are either back on the street or getting slaps on the wrists for burglary and robbery. “Crime is on the increase.”

The district attorney said tougher laws passed in the 1990s, like the Three Strikes law that sent criminals to jail for life after three major offenses, had brought the crime rate down to historic lows. But he said the latest measures are making it harder for law enforcement to do its job and reversing those years of progress.

“The Three Strikes law was great and put a lot of career criminals in prison,” he said. “It was part of a national wave to reduce crime.”

Rackauckus told the crowd that in 2015 his staff of 800 prosecutors and investigators reviewed 70,000 cases. Of those cases, 58,000 charges were filed with a 92% felony conviction rate.

He also said he has worked with other DAs to get a measure on the ballot, Proposition 66, that would make the death penalty more efficient.

But he warned of a competing measure, Proposition 62, that would eliminate the death penalty and Propositon 57, which if passed would make parole hearings easier to get for those behind bars.

That measure would potentially make 35,000 to 45,000 criminals

eligible for parole.

In the Spotlight: CMPD Officer Lance Healey

Costa Mesa Police Officer Lance Healey was the recipient of June’s CEO Leadership Award.

Our video team spent some time with Healey, who helps run the Police Department’s highly successful Pre-Academy, to get an idea of what his workday is like. Click on the video below for more:

Three more officers join Costa Mesa Police Department’s rising ranks

Police Chief Rob Sharpnack praised yet another “bright spot” in the department’s rebuilding efforts as he introduced two promising new officers and one new reserve officer in a swearing-in and badge-pinning ceremony Monday morning July 11.

The two officers were much-coveted lateral hires, bringing in valuable experience and leadership to a growing police department.

Kristofer Moore comes to Costa Mesa via the San Bernardino Sheriff Department and Denny Bak moved from the Fullerton Police Department. In addition, the chief announced the addition of Reserve Officer Cory Estes, who comes by way of the Los Angeles Police Department, where he is currently a field training officer.

Chief Sharpnack said he was especially proud of the new, young and enthusiastic talent that makes up a big portion of the Costa Mesa police force and the success of the department's training programs.

"Throughout the county, a number of executives and law enforcement leaders have talked about the excellence and energy this agency has shown," Sharpnack said, referring to the department's success in enforcing high-profile criminal cases. "We are at the tip of the spear when it comes to technology and advanced training."

City CEO Tom Hatch, Mayor Steve Mensinger and Councilwoman Katrina Foley also attended the ceremony and personally welcomed the new officers aboard.

"There are a lot of people here who have worked hard to make this a great organization," Hatch told the officers. "We are the best police department in Orange County."

Bak grew up in Laguna Beach and attended UCI, where he graduated in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in economics. He attended the Rio Hondo Police Academy in 2008 and was hired by the Irivine Police Department in 2009. In 2010, he was recognized as Auto Theft Officer of the Year. In 2011 and 2012, Bak earned MADD awards for DUI enforcement along with the MADD Hero Award in 2012.

In 2013, Bak joined the Fullerton Police Department, serving as a patrol officer and field training officer. He is also Drug Recognition Expert and Firearms Instructor and helps prepare new recruits for the police academy. Bak also earned MADD awards there as well in 2013 and 2015.

Moore has been with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department since 2014 and attended the department's basic academy, where he graduated top of the class. He was assigned to the custodial environment at West Valley Detention Center. Over the past two years, Moore has been exposed to a variety of custody assignments and training opportunities.

A state champion and All American swimmer in high school and college, Moore served as an ocean lifeguard for the city of San Clemente from 2006 to 2014, where he was awarded both the Unsung Hero and the Lifeguard of the Year awards.

Estes was hired by the Los Angeles Police Department in 2008 and attended that department's basic academy. Over the past several years, Estes has been assigned to the Hollywood Division, West Traffic, and Harbor Division. He has worked collaterally in plain clothes-undercover, bike patrol and special enforcement assignments. Currently, he serves as a Field Training Officer in the Harbor Division.

Estes grew up in Long Beach and attended UCI, where he earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and social behavior.

After having badges pinned on them by family members, the three officers were sworn in by Costa Mesa City Clerk Brenda Green. See video below:

http://cityofcostamesanews.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/MVI_7923.mp4

Costa Mesa Police Officer Lance Healey honored with CEO Leadership Award

City CEO Tom Hatch presented Costa Mesa Police Officer Lance Healey with the June CEO Leadership Award at the monthly meet and greet on Thursday June 23.

Healey joined the Costa Mesa Police Department in 2005 after a lengthy and distinguished 20-year career in the Marine Corps, where he held the titles of Team Leader, Platoon Sergeant, Platoon Commander and Chief Instructor at Camp Pendleton's Scout Sniper Basic Course.

Officer Healey currently serves as the Sniper Team Leader for the department's SWAT team and is responsible for the section's monthly training. His involvement in the Training Bureau includes serving as a Firearms Instructor, development and execution of the new 16 hour POST-mandated firearms course, and development and administration of the Pre-Academy, as the Lead Instructor, preparing recruits from multiple agencies for the Sheriff's Academy. Lance is instrumental in ensuring the success of our Academy recruits.

He also hopes to reestablish Costa Mesa's K9 program and develop a new standard of excellence to ensure the program's long-term success.

In addition, Hatch honored seven newly hired employees, namely McKenna Ewing from the CEO's Office, Victoria Chavez, Ana Cordova, Rohan Ronvelia and Quinn Harter from Parks and Community Services and Kevin Suy and June Jeong from the Police Department. Jeong, the newest police recruit, graduated top of the class from the Orange County Sheriff's Academy.

Also honored was Bart Mejia from Public Services who was

recently promoted to City Engineer.