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Deputy Catches 2 Children Dropped from Burning Building

- Deputy Jeff Kim slightly injured, children and parents are OK

(Dec. 27, 2005) Two young children are alive today, thanks to the quick actions of two Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau deputies who responded to an apartment fire, early Tuesday, in Watts.

Deputies Jeff Kim and Annemarie Matusik, who are stationed at Metro's Rail Operations Center, were cruising Imperial Highway when they were flagged down at 2:50 a.m. by a passing trucker who saw flames coming from a building in the Imperial Court complex.

They rushed to the scene and found a second-floor apartment ablaze. Inside were a mother, father and two children – a nine-year-old boy and a year-old girl.

While Matusik used a fire extinguisher to keep the blaze at bay, Kim positioned himself to catch the kids. The mother first dropped her daughter into Kim's waiting arms. Then the father dropped their son.

The impact of the heavier child knocked Kim to the ground. He was transported to St. Francis Hospital where he was treated for a mouth injury and smoke inhalation and released.

Neither child was injured. The mother also jumped from the second floor window but, along with her husband, apparently wasn't injured.

"People already are calling to ask about making contributions to the family," said Lt. Jenny Bethune of the TSB South Bureau. She referred callers to the Watch Commander at 323-563-5000.

Firefighters are investigating the cause of the fire, according to Sheriff's Lt. Ed. Luevano, who also responded to the scene.