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Sheriff's deputies found considerable evidence that served as cause to find probationers in violation, as well as some that allowed new charges to be brought. The drug paraphernalia, weapons, burglary equipment, tagging and vandalism tools shown were only the most salacious evidence collected in the 54-location search.



Photos by Jimmy Stroup

## Sheriff's Stage a Massive Probation Compliance Inspection

By JIMMY STROUP

(March 27, 2008) In a multi-agency effort to check on vandals released on probation, the Transit Services Bureau (TSB) led a probation compliance inspection, March 26, to 56 locations in the San Gabriel Valley. Nineteen offenders were arrested violating their probation or for an outstanding arrest warrant.

Most had tagged on the Metro system. Though the TSB had already arrested these offenders on previous offenses, the deputies said that probation searches are an important element in reducing vandalism.

"It's good for us because it lets them know that the TSB is out there, checking up on them," TSB Detective Frank Richter said. "A lot of them are crewed up and this also lets their crews know that we're out here, actively working to keep vandalism down. That has a deterring effect."

The deputies combined with local police departments in El Monte, Azusa, Baldwin and West Covina for the massive sweep. An agent from the Department of Children and Family Services rode with each team, as well a Los Angeles County Probation officer.



TSB Detectives Mike Shaw and Frank Richter (holding box) were part of a team that went to six locations in the San Gabriel Valley to perform probation inspections. The suspect at this location was found in violation of his probation for vandalism and burglary.

The group of police and enforcement officers was split into nine teams and given five or six locations to serve probation searches on.

**Up early to catch people at home**

The action started at 5 a.m., and most teams had finished the searches by noon.

At the end of the day, eight location searches found materials in violation of offenders' probation and resulted in arrests. Six probationers were found with other illegal materials, such as drugs or guns and were arrested under new charges.

Six suspects were also arrested for outstanding warrants. Some of these were other household residents who weren't the targets of the searches.

"Our goal is to check up on the offender – we don't want to destroy their house," said Richter. "The other residents haven't done anything and we don't mean to disrespect them or their property. Well, normally they haven't done anything...."



TSB Detective Frank Richter holds several Metro fare cards found during a search, indicating that the offender may still vandalize the system. Deputies plan to cross-reference any examples of tagging found at search locations with unsolved cases.

The search teams came up empty when probationers didn't live at the address they'd given probation officers. Those on probation are required under the terms of their conditional release to keep the County informed of their whereabouts.

"Half the time, they don't even live where they say they live," Richter said. "They'll give you their parent's address and even show up to meet their probation officer on scheduled visits. But they actually live with their girlfriend in some other city. This kind of event flushes them out."

**'Safety's First' is common a theme**

Before each location was searched, the teams would assemble down the street to go over strategy. Each house was given a specific plan of entry and the deputy who was in charge of the team stressed the importance of "keeping sharp" and "staying safe."

"We've got to stay safe out there," TSB Sgt. David Wessol said before one of the searches. "That's number one. We stay safe and move at the speed we need to get this done right."

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