



## Three Out of Six Patrol Squads Fall Below Minimum Staffing Levels in Last Night's SB Sheriff's Patrol Coverage

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**SANTA BARBARA** - Half of the six patrol squads deployed by the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department patrol assignments fell below minimum staffing levels in last night's patrol coverage, according to "Beat Sheets" recorded by the Sheriff's Office dispatchers. Sheriff's patrols in Goleta, Carpinteria and Santa Maria areas fell short of the minimum staffing levels required for the safety of patrol deputies and residents calling for assistance.

SB County Deputy Sheriff's Association President Matt McFarlin said the deputies are already stretched too thin across the county. "Our custody deputies are already working mandatory overtime assignments to cover shifts in the County's custody facilities, now our patrol deputies are facing the exact same prospect because we don't have enough sworn personnel to maintain minimum staffing levels," McFarlin said.

McFarlin explained that minimum staffing levels is what the Sheriff's Office and the command staff determine to be the least number of patrol deputies in the field that can maintain sufficient coverage, adequate response times and safe backup response without causing unsafe delays for deputies and residents. When deployment falls below minimum staffing levels, deputies and residents are at risk.

The SBSO maintains six patrol squads to cover the unincorporated county areas and contract cities. For the 12-hour overnight period last night, half of the patrol squads failed to deploy minimum staffing levels. The situation has become more and more common, McFarlin said. "The 'beat sheets' recorded by the Sheriff's dispatchers showed we were short staffed in three patrol squads. That means we become a public safety program that is entirely reactive; we try to cover all of the calls for service. If

there is a incident that requires backup when we are short staffed, the delays could quickly become life-threatening for our deputies and the public," McFarlin said.

Since January of this year, the SBCDSA has been calling on Countywide officials to address the problem of vacancies in the ranks of SBSO's custody deputies and deputy sheriffs. In meetings and letters to all five members of the County Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff and his command staff, the SBCDSA has urged all of the County's leaders to prioritize efforts to allow the Sheriff to recruit and retain qualified sworn personnel.

"We've lost a total of 8 deputy sheriffs and custody deputies to other agencies since January of this year," McFarlin said. "We've lost even more to retirements, normal attrition and injuries. The current situation is simply unsustainable, and now it's beginning to impact our Department's ability to deploy enough patrol deputies to keep us and the public safe," McFarlin said.

The members of the SBCDSA Board of Directors unanimously adopted a position statement that demands the Sheriff and County leaders take the following steps:

- The Sheriff should immediately take steps to monitor and announce the deployment of deputy sheriffs in all six of the County's patrol squads.
- If the number of deputies falls below minimum staffing levels for more than two shifts in a week in any patrol squad, the Sheriff should take steps to initiate mandatory overtime in that patrol squad until adequate staffing levels can be restored.
- The Sheriff should outline a detailed plan to recruit enough new sworn personnel to restore deputy sheriff and custody deputy ranks to safe numbers that allow optimal staffing levels in the County's custody facilities and patrol squads.
- The Sheriff should report his progress on that plan to the Board of Supervisors, and make any requests that would facilitate his efforts to restore safe staffing levels, up to and including a request that the Board engage in labor contract discussions on ideas that will restore the Department's ability to recruit and retain sworn personnel, as has been proposed by the DSA.
- The SB County Board of Supervisors should immediately review the status of labor contract negotiations with the SBCDSA, noting that DSA members have been working without a contract for more than 450 days.
- The Board of Supervisors should direct their staff to secure the modest resources necessary to address the SBSO staffing shortages, up to and including a review of the DSA proposal which is aimed directly at restoring the Sheriff's ability to recruit and retain sufficient personnel.

All of these demands have been discussed with the Sheriff, his command staff and the members of the County Board of Supervisors. Now that deployment levels have fallen below minimum, safe levels in many of their Districts, it is the sincere hope of the DSA leadership that the Board and the Sheriff will take action to resolve this critical issue.

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**Deputy Sheriffs' Association of Santa Barbara County**

Representing law enforcement professionals since 1971

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