



Fresno County Sheriff's Department

Richard Pierce, Sheriff **Thursday 6-15-06**
News Release

Lieutenant Mark Padilla
Office 559.896-2003 Fax 559. 896-1836
E-Mail: Mark.Padilla@fresnosheriff.org

OPERATION HEAVY METAL

The Fresno County Sheriff's Department has responded to the dramatic increase in metal theft throughout the county as well as the entire Central Valley by forming a Metal Theft Task Force. The Metal Theft Task Force is comprised of members of the Sheriff's Department and other agencies assigned to the Central Valley AG Task Force.

Metal prices have risen significantly over the past year reaching as high as \$4.00 a pound for some types of metal. The Sheriff's Department has experienced a significant increase in the amount of theft in the rural areas of Fresno County. Metal thieves are attacking any unsupervised metal, whether it's attached to a pump, an abandoned structure or a new housing development.

The Fresno County Sheriff's Department Metal Theft Task Force has been actively combating theft during Operation Heavy Metal for the past 2 weeks. The Operation is in its first stage focusing on ensuring that the metal scrap yards are in compliance with state and county laws. The identification, arrest, and criminal prosecution of current and potential metal thieves are a mission priority.

The Sheriff's Department has taken steps to educate all community partners regarding this type of crime. Since January 2006, The Sheriff's Department and the District Attorney's Office sent out a letter outlining all applicable laws regarding metal recycling to all scrap metal yards in Fresno County.

During the last 2 weeks the task force has been at the metal yards monitoring their intake and accuracy of their receipts. During this period the task force conducted 43 field interview contacts, conducted 15 Business and Profession Code violation investigations, issued 15 citations, stored 19 vehicles and arrested 15 suspects for various misdemeanor and felony property crimes as well as warrants.

The Metal Theft Task Force's goal is to reduce all metal thefts within Fresno County. The Fresno County Sheriff's Department is asking for the public's help in curbing metal theft. If you have any information regarding any type of metal theft please call the Sheriff's Department at (559) 896-2003 and ask for Detective Lewis Pipkin or Sergeant Greg Gularte. Any media inquiries can be directed to Sergeant G. Gularte or Lieutenant M. Padilla at (559) 896-2003.

