

CHP focuses on El Dorado Hills

By Denise Marie Siino, Mother Lode News

[11.21.07] Beginning Thursday, Nov. 15, the California Highway Patrol is reallocating resources to allow for a greater focus on several high-traffic areas throughout El Dorado County, beginning in El Dorado Hills, according to CHP spokesman Sean Ricci.

“The CHP understands the need for increased enforcement in the rapidly growing areas of our county,” said Capt. Bill Donovan, commander of the Placerville CHP office.

“We also realize well established and outlying areas need coverage as well. This is why we are implementing a program that should have long-lasting effects throughout all of El Dorado County.”

This reallocation of resources involves bringing in CHP officers from outside the county to help target areas within the county that have been identified as chronic traffic hot spots, starting with El Dorado Hills.

For an indefinite period of time, El Dorado Hills residents can “expect to see more patrol cars around schools during pick-up and drop-off times,” Donovan said, as well as “several county roads that are primary commute routes.”

Thursday’s program kickoff began with a briefing held early in the morning at the El Dorado Hills Fire Department Station 85, attended by Commander Bill Donovan, CHP Assistant Chiefs Michael Champion and Sal Segura, and Placerville office Sgt. Jim Faria, who is in charge of the project.

“This is not just about El Dorado Hills,” said Champion, who is assistant chief over the Valley Division. “It’s about placing a renewed focus on El Dorado County,” which has been experiencing growing pains for several years.

El Dorado Hills has been targeted as a starting point of the program specifically because of its dense population and high traffic volume, including a high number of complaints from community members ranging from excessive speeds along certain stretches of roadway to parking problems around local schools.

The three-pronged program combines educating the public through non-ticketed traffic stops, enforcement as necessary, and engineering-working with the Department of Transportation on street signage and design.

“We want to be proactive, not reactive,” Champion said.

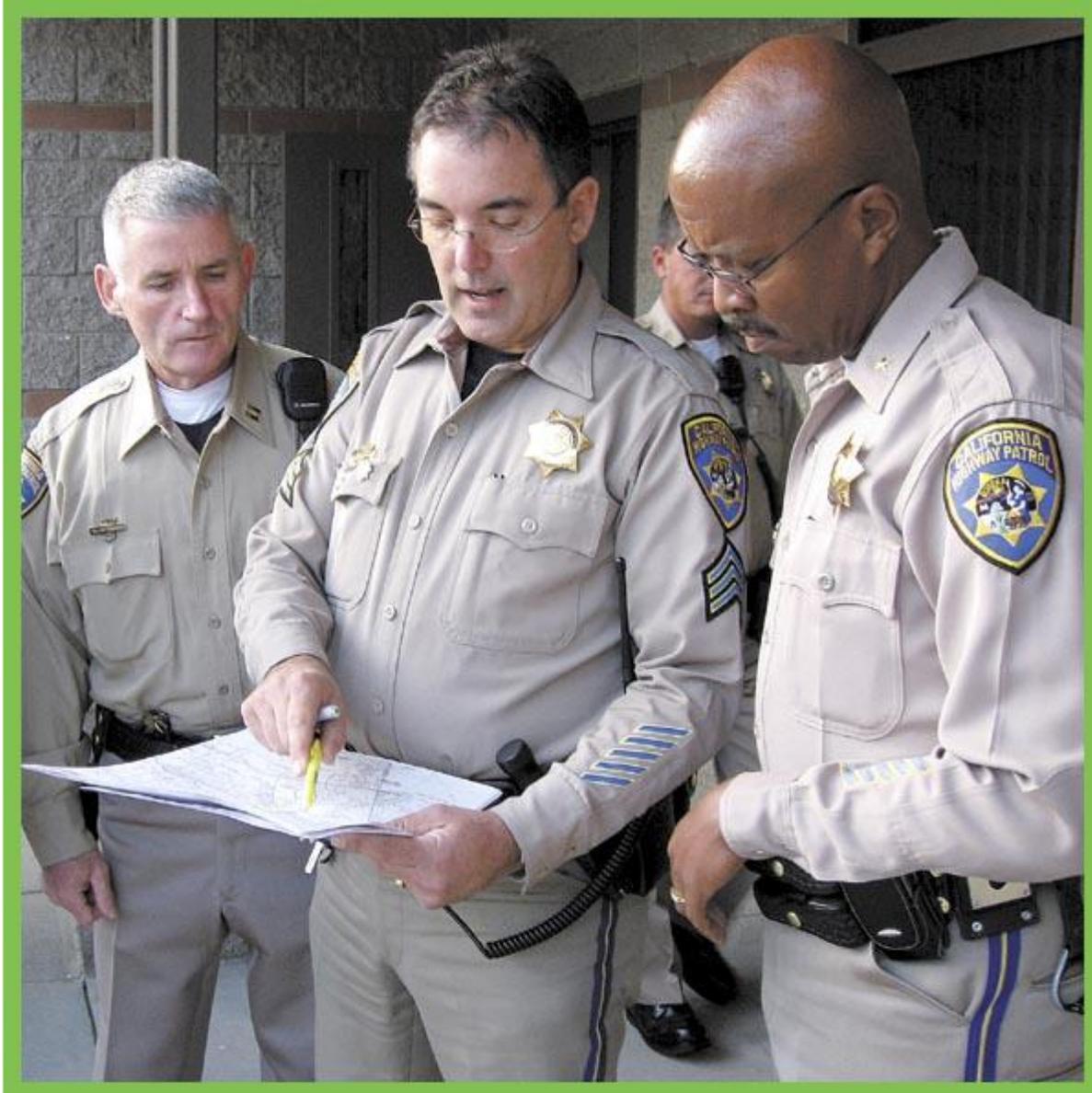
Within a four-hour period Thursday morning, eight CHP officers impounded four cars, handed out 15 verbal warnings and 45 citations, and handled two roadway collisions within the west end of the county, most of which occurred inside the bounds of El Dorado Hills, Ricci said.

The program is ongoing.

“Division headquarters is recognizing that adjustments have to be made in personnel to lend more coverage to El Dorado County,” Champion said.

“We have had great success with similar programs throughout the state,” Donovan said. “Traffic in El Dorado County, like other growing areas, is a continuing challenge. We hope education regarding what we can do for El Dorado County residents, as well as stepped-up enforcement, will help alleviate congestion, and more importantly, keep our community a safe place to travel.”

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COMMANDING OFFICERS within the California Highway Patrol review “hot spot” locations within El Dorado Hills, where officers focused their time Thursday morning during the kick-off to the CHP’s resource reallocation project. Left to right are Assistant Chief Sal Segura, Placerville Commander Bill Donovan, Placerville Sgt. Jim Faria and Assistant Chief Michael Champion. El Dorado Hills was targeted as the beginning point for the ongoing program due to its dense population and high traffic volume. *Mother Lode News photo by Denise Sino*