

SANDOVAL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT YEAR 2025

Teamwork

Respect

Integrity

Stewardship

Professionalism

Safety

Mutual Trust

Transparency

Accountability

Proudly Serving
Since 1903





MISSION STATEMENT



*The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office is committed to working in a partnership with individuals, communities, businesses, and other divisions and agencies to provide **Safety and Quality Service** in order to promote a high quality of life for the people of Sandoval County. This will be accomplished through fair enforcement of the law and diligent defense of the rights of all. The Sheriff, deputies and staff strive to provide professional services to the public in an effective, efficient and timely manner through communication, consideration and cooperation.*



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This report was completed by Chief Deputy Mills, designed to provide you noteworthy and transparent information regarding how we carry out our responsibility to protect you and your families.



ABOUT SANDOVAL COUNTY



County History

Sandoval County has a rich cultural history and was a thriving region centuries before Don Francisco de Coronado explored and camped near present-day Bernalillo in 1540. Prehistoric artifacts found throughout the county date back thousands of years, with archaeological evidence suggesting that Sandia Man lived and hunted in the area during prehistoric times.

County Today

Today, Sandoval County encompasses 3,714 square miles of diverse geography. Sandoval County is generally recognized as one of the fastest-growing counties in New Mexico. Sandoval County is the 3rd largest county by population in New Mexico, behind Bernalillo and Santa Fe has a population of approximately 160,000 people. It includes the incorporated municipalities of Bernalillo, Cuba, Corrales, Jemez Springs, Rio Rancho and San Ysidro, as well as numerous unincorporated communities, all or portions of seven Indian pueblos, and all or portions of six Tribal entities/lands.

Sheriff's Office General Information

63 Sworn Deputies

7 Court Security Officers

2 Animal Control Officers

5 Civilian Support Employees

1,516 Miles of Maintained Roads that are patrolled

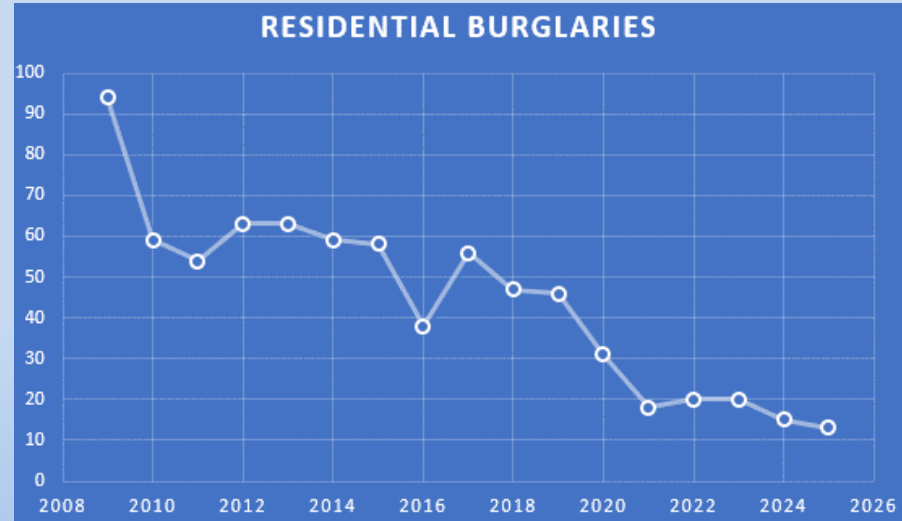
3,714 Square Miles in Size

13 Pueblos and Tribal Entities/Lands we assist with Law Enforcement concerns



Crime in general in the unincorporated areas of Sandoval County has steadily declined over the past decade.

Property crimes are an example of a category that has steadily declined over the past decade. Historically—and continuing today—many residential and vehicle burglaries are committed by drug-addicted individuals passing through from neighboring communities such as Albuquerque, Los Lunas, Belen, and Santa Fe. These individuals often enter residential neighborhoods in the unincorporated areas of Sandoval County, burglarize a few homes or vehicles—particularly vehicles parked at hiking trail areas, which are attractive targets—and then leave the county rather than remain or reside here.



A key factor in reducing these crimes has been the Sheriff's Office practice of assigning **every residential and vehicle burglary case to an investigator**. This focused investigative approach has significantly increased burglary solvability rates. For example, when a stolen credit card from a burglary is used at a local store, investigators can quickly identify a suspect—often leading to swift arrest and recovery of stolen property before additional crimes occur.

In addition to investigative follow-through, deputies employ proactive enforcement strategies. One common tactic is saturating neighborhoods with marked patrol units for several days or weeks following a burglary. This visible presence increases the likelihood of apprehending offenders and, at minimum, deters further criminal activity.

Working closely with neighborhood associations and detectives, patrol deputies have aggressively conducted 14,436 self-initiated area, business, and home checks—effectively “blocking the opportunity to commit crime.” These combined efforts have contributed to the Sheriff's Office achieving the lowest number of residential burglaries in the past 15 years.



MESSAGE FROM THE SHERIFF



In 2025, Deputies continued the philosophy of working harder, working together and holding back crime in the fastest growing County in New Mexico. Deputies increased “Self-Initiated Area, Business and Home Checks” this year by 16%. Vehicle Traffic stops increased over 67%.

*Historically, Police traffic stops serve as a cornerstone of proactive policing by enforcing traffic laws, improving road safety, and enabling the detection of more serious crime. Sandoval County is no exception! Numerous crimes were interrupted and blocked due to Deputies aggressively saturating known drug corridors in Sandoval County and relentlessly working with neighborhood associations, close patrol programs and residential areas, “Basically blocking the opportunity to commit crime”. **Both Property Crimes and Violent Crimes in notable areas dropped this year and Residential Burglaries have showed a consistent drop over the last 4 years.** (See page Crime Page 15 for details)*

I have always shared the belief that there is a close relationship between drugs and crime and that drug abusers commit crimes to pay for their drugs and this dynamic directly affects crime in our County. I am proud of the combined effort of all members of the Sheriff’s Office in combating the drug problem in Sandoval County and surrounding areas. In 2025, all units from Patrol, Traffic, K-9, Criminal Investigations, Tactical Response Team and the Street Crimes Unit worked together with Federal Agencies, took over \$4,027,555.20 of illegal drugs off the street. (See Individual Unit Statistics in this report, also note smaller drug seizures are not calculated and therefore not counted.).



Frequently asked questions regarding the Sheriff's Office.



Our dedicated employees serve the citizens of Sandoval County 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We are committed to providing the public with the quickest, most efficient response to emergency calls and respond to “all” essential calls for service. The Sheriff's Office does not screen calls for service and as a matter of practice, a Deputy will be dispatched in person to all calls. However (in a non-emergency) there are times when it is appropriate to ask the dispatcher to speak to a Sheriffs Supervisor. If a Sheriffs Supervisor is not immediately available, the dispatcher will take your information and a Sheriffs Supervisor or Deputy will return your call as soon as possible. For non-emergency questions during business hours you can call the Sheriff Office at 505-867-7526.

Who am I calling when I dial 911 or the non-emergency number 505-891-7226?

The Sandoval County Regional Emergency Communications Center (SCRECC) receives and dispatches all sheriffs, police, fire, medical, and animal control emergency 911 and non-emergency calls for Sandoval County. Dispatchers are highly trained to send the appropriate type and number of emergency services units in response to your calls for assistance. Please remember, you are not talking to a Sheriffs employee when you call dispatch, SCRECC is a separate agency from the Sheriff's Office. If you are seeking information regarding an incident, reports, or an issue of concern or other questions more appropriate for a Deputy, **and it is a non-emergency issue**, please call the Sheriff's Office directly at 505-867-7526, during business hours.



Where do I find Information on the internet, regarding the Sheriff's Office & Services the County provides?



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Where do I find Information on the internet, regarding the Sheriff's Office & Services the County provides?

www.sandovalcountynm.gov is the Counties Official web site. The web site has "Quick Links" that are helpful in answering frequently asked questions.

Quick Links

- Information About the Commission
- Boards, Councils & Committees
- Meeting Agendas
- Meeting Videos
- Requests For Records
- Requests for Proposal

- Search Property Records
- County Codes & Ordinances
- Inmate Lookup & Video Visitation
- Financials & Transparency
- Pay Taxes Online
- Pay Ambulance Bill

- Animal Services - Lost Pets
- Landfill/Recycling
- Request Road Maintenance Service
- Code Enforcement Complaint Form
- Open Burning Information
- Free-Roaming Horses

- Employment
- County Calendar
- Public Comment
- Sandoval County Tourism
- Filming Opportunities
- Sign up for press release



Common Questions from Residents



At times, I see Sheriffs Units sitting in parking lots or rest areas for long periods of time.

Deputies complete reports on a mobile terminal in their unit, and also complete Law Enforcement training on the computer that is required to retain certification. Completing these duties while remaining parked and available in the community, allows a visible deterrent and a quicker response to an emergency.

Will the Sheriff's Office check my residence while I am out of town?

Yes, the Sheriff's Office conducts vacation checks as a part of its preventative patrol program. To set up a vacation check, simply go to the link on the Sheriffs County Web Page "Submit a Close Patrol Request Form"

When I call to report something, do I have to give my name?

No. It is not required, however, leaving your name and a phone number is appreciated and allows a Deputy to follow-up with the caller on the information you provided.

Why do we sometimes see City or Town Officers conducting police activity in the unincorporated areas of the County?

Law enforcement agencies within Sandoval County work as a team and this benefits everyone involved. On occasion, the Sheriff's Office requires assistance from municipal or state agencies for certain issues, an example would be a multicar crash incident, search for a dangerous felon, SWAT or Bomb situation, etc.

Why do we sometimes see Deputies in Rio Rancho, Town of Bernalillo or the Village of Cuba.

Sandoval County Sheriff's Deputies have authority anywhere within Sandoval County and adjoining jurisdictions. This includes, inside the city of Rio Rancho, Town of Bernalillo, Village of Cuba etc.

Information on Free Roaming Horses in Placitas.

*Information regarding the Free Roaming Horses in Placitas can be found in the Animal Welfare Programs & Services area of the **Community Services Link**.*



Common Questions from Residents



The Sheriff's Office responds to all calls and incidents.

Regardless of the type of call, deputies are encouraged to listen and work with citizens to solve problems together. Occasionally a call might not necessarily be a law enforcement problem. However, Deputies are encouraged to be problem solvers, flexible and take the time with a citizen and help the citizen with their problem. Sometimes, this means coordinating with other government or social groups or services that can help with quality of life concerns. This strategy seems simple but extremely important in creating public trust with the community. Time and time again, a citizen who has gained the public trust of the deputies later provides information that helps the community or leads to solving a crime.

The Sheriff's Office investigates all incidents and criminal cases.

The Sheriff's Office has Crime Analytics and Mapping and software tools that assist in following crime trends, and this software has proven helpful, however the Sheriff's Office does not utilize a computer to select what cases are assigned for follow-up investigation, since ALL FELONY CASES ARE INVESTIGATED.

All Felony cases are reviewed telephonically by an on-call Detective/Investigator while a Deputy is on the scene of a crime, regardless of the time of day or night. A decision is made if an Investigator will immediately respond or pick up the case the next day. All Burglary cases and other various Felony cases are assigned to either Criminal Investigations or the Street Crimes unit, in an effort to make sure no incident falls through the cracks. This approach has helped increase the number of incidents solved and prosecuted and creates a stronger relationship between Law Enforcement and the community.

The Sheriff's Office is committed to working with adjoining jurisdictions as a team. The Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit sponsors a bi-weekly Taskforce meeting with local, state, federal and the Office of the District Attorney. Crime trends, individual case, suspect and Teamwork strategies are among the issues discussed. Participants in the Taskforce routinely work together on a common case or group of suspects that are committing crimes that effect multiple jurisdictions.



INTERESTING FACTS

“YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK”



Unlike the incorporated communities of Rio Rancho, Town of Bernalillo, and Corrales, revenue generated from citations issued by Sheriff’s Office deputies does **not** go to the Sheriff’s Office or to Sandoval County. All monies collected through Magistrate Court are deposited into the State General Fund.

As a result, when a deputy issues a traffic citation, it does not create revenue for the County. In fact, it represents a cost. These costs include:

- Deputy wages and benefits
- Fuel and maintenance of marked patrol units
- Equipment costs
- Court time for deputies to appear and testify
- Administrative processing

Communities throughout Sandoval County frequently request increased traffic enforcement, particularly in response to concerns about speeding or aggressive driving. The Sheriff’s Office must carefully manage available resources, including overtime, and evaluate special enforcement requests based on citizen complaints and verified speed data.

Traffic Speed Radar Trailer

The Sheriff’s Office operates a multipurpose Traffic Speed Radar Trailer that:

- Displays real-time speeds to motorists to increase awareness
- Helps reduce speeding through voluntary compliance
- Collects traffic data that can be analyzed and used to plan targeted enforcement operations



INTERESTING FACTS

"YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK"



Cost of Special Traffic Operations

Targeted traffic enforcement operations conducted outside routine patrol activities come at a measurable cost.

Example 1:

- **Location:** Hwy 550, Mile Post 6
- **Date:** July 2025
- **Cost:** \$1,869
- **Results:**
 - 33 speeding citations
 - 1 seatbelt violation
 - 7 no insurance violations
 - 25 miscellaneous violation citations

Example 2:

- **Location:** Hwy 4
- **Date:** August 2025
- **Cost:** \$2,871
- **Results:**
 - 4 warrant arrests
 - 1 DWI arrest
 - Numerous additional citations

These examples illustrate that while traffic enforcement enhances public safety, it does not serve as a revenue-generating mechanism for the Sheriff's Office or the County. Instead, it requires strategic planning, careful allocation of personnel, and responsible budget management to address community concerns effectively.



2025 End of the Year Overview



One of the many issues facing the law enforcement community today is staff turnover, and 2025 has proven to be another challenging year. This cycle has prevented the Sheriff's Office from being fully staffed at any point over the last 15 years. The recent negative climate surrounding law enforcement has hastened retirements, while surrounding agencies have engaged in aggressive recruiting efforts, offering promises of "greener grass" and substantial sign-on bonuses. The Sheriff's Office began 2025 critically short of personnel, operating at or below minimum staffing levels. Patrol Deputy turnover in 2025 was approximately 27%, resulting in a significant reduction in available manpower and directly impacting the ability to maintain minimum patrol staffing on each shift. A lack of certified applicants further exacerbated the situation, creating serious and ongoing patrol staffing shortages. This continuous cycle of attrition and delayed replacement has kept the Sheriff's Office from ever reaching full staffing strength during the past 15 years. When a Patrol Deputy resigns, there is an unavoidable lag time in the hiring process, followed by a training period that can range from as little as 30 days to as long as six months, depending on the experience level of the new hire. This delay further strains already limited staffing resources. In early 2025, the Sheriff's Office worked collaboratively with the County Manager's Office, Human Resources, and veteran deputies to develop an in-house Law Enforcement Cadet Program designed to recruit, train, and prepare qualified candidates to fill vacant deputy positions. During 2025, the Sheriff's Office received approximately 108 cadet applications. Applicants who successfully advanced through a rigorous, multi-stage selection process—including physical readiness testing, medical evaluations, psychological assessments, background investigations, and panel interviews—were placed on an eligibility hiring list for appointment. In May 2025, the first five applicants began an in-house Pre-Academy Cadet Program. During the program, they received comprehensive training that included legal instruction, firearms training, defensive tactics, less-lethal and chemical munitions training, active shooter response, and daily physical fitness. All five applicants successfully completed the program and were accepted into the Central New Mexico Community College Law Enforcement Academy.



SCSO Cadets Class 14 graduate CNM Law Enforcement Academy.



In December 2025, all five cadets graduated from the academy, earning honors including Top Shot, Top Academic Performance, and Class Valedictorian. Academy staff reported that Sandoval County's cadets demonstrated leadership from day one and represented themselves and the Sheriff's Office in a highly professional manner. Upon completion of the Field Training Officer (FTO) Program in mid-April 2026, where they will train under senior Field Training Officers, these deputies will join patrol operations. Their addition is expected to help alleviate minimum staffing challenges.



Deputy Cainaan Salido
Deputy Mariah Foster
Deputy Nickolas Gonzales
Deputy Rachel Diminovich
Deputy Clayton Chancellor





SCSO CADETS “ CLASS 15 CNM LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY ”

In September 2025, an additional eight applicants began the Pre-Academy Cadet Program. Seven successfully completed the program in January 2026 and were accepted into the January 2026 class of the Central New Mexico Community College Law Enforcement Academy. Following their anticipated graduation this summer, they will enter the Field Training Officer Program and serve as Deputies in training for approximately six to twelve weeks. This field training process ensures each cadet deputy completes all requirements outlined in NMAC 10.29.9.14. The program is designed to prepare trainees for patrol assignments and ensure they acquire the skills necessary to operate safely, productively, and professionally, in accordance with the general law enforcement duties of this office.

Cadet Samuel Johansson
Cadet Travis Mansfield
Cadet Bradley Giordano
Cadet Etni Estrada Perez
Cadet Hector Rivera
Cadet Anthony Martinez
Cadet Marible Medel





2024 DRONE PROGRAM



In 2025, the Drone Team deployed 176 times, representing a substantial increase in operational tempo. Deployments supported a wide range of missions, including suspect searches, missing and endangered persons investigations, lost hiker rescues, accident reconstruction mapping, perimeter security, fire support operations, and tactical responses. All Drone Team members continue to receive extensive Federal, State, and private-sector training, along with ongoing education in applicable FAA regulations and industry best practices.

To expand operational capabilities, the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office added two Autel drone platforms to its inventory in 2025. Both systems are equipped with thermal imaging and integrated audio loudspeaker technology, significantly enhancing nighttime operations, search and rescue missions, suspect call-outs, and coordinated emergency response efforts.

Through strategic growth, technological advancement, and increased personnel capacity, the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office Drone Program continues to strengthen coordinated law enforcement and fire response capabilities while prioritizing the safety of first responders and the community.



COMMAND & SUPERVISORY STAFF

Jesse James Casaus, Sheriff

Joe Gonzales, Undersheriff

Allen Mills, Chief Deputy

Orlando Carrillo, Lieutenant – *Patrol Division, Traffic Services/ Fatal Crash Team, Honor Guard.*

Michael Soden, Lieutenant – *Civil Division/Court Security, Animal Control, Search & Rescue, Supervisor Development.*

Bryan Peters, Lieutenant – *Criminal Investigations, Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit, Emergency Operations.*

John Castaneda, Lieutenant – *Professional Standards, Community Services, K-9 Unit, PIO, SOR*



Scott Holt, Sergeant- Patrol

Anthony Hans, Sergeant- Patrol

Jonathan Crespín, Sergeant - Patrol

Thomas Griffin, Sergeant – Patrol

Steven Gushiniere, Sergeant- Patrol



Luke Osborn, Sergeant –K-9

Brian Espinoza, Sergeant- Civil & Court Security Division.

Rene Alvarado, Sergeant- Criminal Investigations

William Dunaway, Sergeant – Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit.

Deputy Della Murray- Training & Safety Coordinator

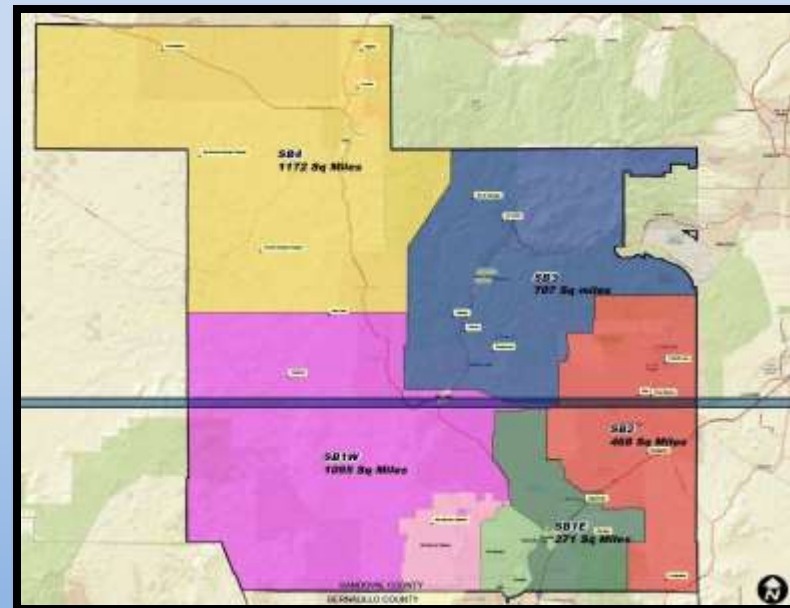


Patrol Division



Patrol is the largest division in the Sheriffs Office. Patrol is currently made up of three shifts that work around the clock, 365 days a year.

When fully staffed, Patrol is staffed with 26 Deputies & 6 Sergeants. Patrol Deputies are primarily responsible to provide public safety by maintaining order, responding to emergencies, protecting people and property, enforcing motor vehicle and criminal laws, and promoting good community relations.





DEPUTY INITIATED ACTIVITY CALLS FOR SERVICE



Total Calls for Service – 36,918 (Over the last 4 years, calls for service has been increasing at a rate of approx. 3000+ calls a year)

Alarm Calls – 247

Suspicious Activity Calls- 452

Vehicle Traffic Stops – 9,872 (68 % increase over last year)

Motor Vehicle Crash (No injury- 252 / With Injury 192 / Roll Over 22)

Self-initiated Area, Business and Home Checks- 14,436 (16% increase over previous year)

Calls Assisting Other Agencies- 507 (27 % increase over previous year)

Public Assist Calls- 473

DWI/DUI Arrests – 39

Domestic Violence Calls- 237

Neighborhood Disputes – 55

Citizen Welfare Checks – 1294

Animal Control Calls – 517

Shots Fired Calls – 136 (Calls are Typically Unincorporated area of the Mesa which Deputies have been aggressively enforcing the County ordinance prohibiting discharge of firearms in certain areas.)



Crime Statistics At a Glance



Crime in "Unincorporated" Sandoval County.

Criminal Homicide:

2017- 4
 2018- 1
 2019- 1
 2020- 5
 2021- 1
 2022—1 (Murder suicide)
 2023- 3
 2024- 0
2025- 0

Forcible Rape Reported:

2017-3
 2018-1
 2019-1
 2020-2
 2021- 0
 2022- 0
 2023- 0
 2024- 3
2025-0

Auto Burglary:

2017- *Not Recorded.*
 2018- 31
 2019- 27
 2020- 26
 2021 - 9
 2022 - 8
 2023- 18
 2024- 17
2025- 5

All Auto Burglary cases are assigned to an Investigator and investigated by the Street Crimes Unit.

Assault/Battery Reported:

2017- 128
 2018- 109
 2019- 149
 2020- 78
 2021- 22
 2022- 28
 2023- 83
 2024-104
2025- 77

Previous years not recorded
 Assault on Peace Officer Incidents -7 total
 Assault on Peace Officer Incidents -7 total
 Assault on Peace Officer Incidents -6 total
Assaults on Peace Officer Incidents- 9 total

Robbery Reported:

2017- 0
 2018- 2
 2019- 1
 2020- 2
 2021- 0
 2022- 2
 2023- 1 (Occurred in Cuba NM)
 2024- 0
2025-0

Residential Burglary:

2017- 56
 2018- 47
 2019- 46
 2020- 31
 2021- 18
 2022- 21
 2023- 20
 2024- 15
2025-13

(Residential Burglary is occupied homes and excludes homes under construction or sheds.) All Burglary cases are assigned to an Investigator and investigated by the Street Crimes Unit.

Each crime case in the report is reviewed at the end of the year to ensure that the details and status are accurate, allowing for reliable total counts. This additional verification is necessary because UCR data does not distinguish "residential burglary" from other types of burglary. Instead, all incidents are categorized simply as burglary, which may include a wide range of locations such as homes, apartments, offices, trailers, boats, and even railroad cars. Residential burglary is addressed separately due to its heightened level of concern, as it represents a direct violation of the personal safety and well-being of residents



Traffic Services Unit



Traffic Services Deputies work in a partnership with patrol deputies and surrounding agencies to continually improve traffic safety thru enforcement, crash investigation, and special event planning and safety education.

Enforcement activities include: excessive speed enforcement initiatives, road rage and aggressive driving enforcement, BKLUP, Click-It-Or-Ticket enforcement, participation in DUI Task Force initiatives, Placitas “Free-Roaming Horse” corridors traffic enforcement, bicycle safety saturation and drug interdiction operations. In 2025, Sandoval County Deputies arrested 39 impaired drivers (DWI/DUI) and conducted 9,872 Traffic Stops.

LED Portable Radar Speed Signs:

The Sheriff’s Office Traffic Unit deploys two ultra-portable electronic speed signs. These radar speed signs display the speeds of oncoming vehicles and allow for variable message displays. The systems are easy to transport and are deployed by Traffic Services Deputies.

Deployed signs have proven highly effective in reducing vehicle speeds and improving safety in congested areas and residential neighborhoods. Additionally, the units are capable of determining average vehicle speeds.

Radar speed signs may be deployed at the request of a citizen, community or a Homeowners Association (HOA), provided the roadway conditions and stated concerns meet the criteria.

Traffic Services Deputies on a daily basis are responsible for the investigations of major vehicle crashes to include fatal collisions and proactive traffic enforcement through-out the county. In 2025, Sandoval County Deputies investigated 466 vehicle crashes. Deputies coordinated numerous special events, Toys for Tots, cycling events and other events promoting traffic safety.





Traffic Fatal Team



When a fatal or serious traffic crash occurs in Sandoval County, the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office Fatal Crash Investigation Team is responsible for conducting a thorough investigation. The need for a highly trained and specialized team arose from the complexity and intricacy of traffic collisions and the importance of understanding their underlying and contributing factors.

The **Traffic Collision Investigation Team** consists of a Lieutenant, a Sergeant, and Deputies who have received advanced training in crash investigation and reconstruction. The purpose of the team is to equip the Sheriff's Office with the expertise, tools, and technical knowledge necessary to properly investigate and analyze collisions involving serious injuries or fatalities.

The team's primary goal is to identify the causes and contributing factors of crashes occurring within the county and to develop information and recommendations that may help prevent similar incidents in the future.

Members of the Traffic Collision Investigation Team are sworn deputies assigned to the Traffic Unit and other divisions within the Sheriff's Office. These deputies are subject to call at any time, day or night, to respond to serious or complex traffic collision investigations.

Team members receive advanced training in multiple levels of collision investigation, including:

- At-Scene Investigations
- Advanced Crash Reconstruction
- Mathematical Speed Determination
- Skid Mark Analysis
- Velocity and Momentum Calculations

In addition to investigative expertise, members are trained in the use of advanced scanning equipment and computer-aided diagramming software. This technology enables investigators to create precise, factual diagrams of collision scenes. These diagrams support detailed reconstruction analysis and may be used as demonstrative evidence in court proceedings.



In 2025, team members investigated nine fatal injury collisions and 18 critical injury crashes. The Traffic Team also assisted Investigations Division Detectives and the Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit with numerous criminal investigations. Members remain committed to delivering high-quality investigative support and identifying causative factors to help prevent future incidents throughout Sandoval County.



Criminal Investigations Unit



The Criminal Investigations Division is comprised of highly motivated and trained sworn deputies who provide support in many areas. The division's values of Integrity, Professionalism, Accountability, High Quality Service and Customer Focus are in line with the Sheriff's Office Mission. Criminal cases requiring further investigation are received in large part from the initial reports taken from deputies while on patrol. Initial Incident reports are submitted to the Criminal Investigations Division and reviewed by the Detective Sergeant for assignment. Detectives are responsible for various types of investigations, which may include: homicide, robbery, burglary, auto theft, identify theft, organized crimes, missing persons, juvenile crime, fraud, narcotics, criminal intelligence, aggravated assault/battery, sexual assault, computer crime, domestic violence, arson, and other various crimes. Detectives spend a considerable amount of time assisting deputies in the field and responding to calls to assist, while maintaining their own caseload. Detectives also utilize several online programs to track property and locate stolen property. Currently, the unit is supervised by a Lieutenant and staffed by one sergeant and two detectives.





COLD CASE UPDATE

In 2025, the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office announced that four unidentified human remains (UHR) cold-cases have been resolved in the past 18 months, representing 83% of the agency's UHR backlog. The identification of Jeanette De La Cruz marks one of several breakthroughs achieved through forensic genetic genealogy.

- Advanced DNA testing solved a 25-year-old mystery, identifying skeletal remains found in Sandoval County in 1999 as 19-year-old Jeanette Maria De La Cruz from Albuquerque. Despite recovering a blanket and clothing fragments, investigators were unable to determine her identity for more than two decades.
- In November 2024, the Sheriff's Office and the New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator submitted forensic evidence to Othram, a Texas-based laboratory specializing in advanced DNA testing. Scientists used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing to build a comprehensive DNA profile, which genealogists then used to develop investigative leads. A reference DNA sample from a relative confirmed the identification through rapid relationship testing in June 2025, according to Detective Donald Chewing, who leads cold-case investigations for the Sheriff's Office.
- Investigators determined De La Cruz likely died of a suspected heroin and cocaine overdose at a Corrales residence. Two men admitted they panicked after discovering her body in a bathtub and moved it to public lands for burial, fleeing when an unknown vehicle approached. Their statements were corroborated by a police informant in 2010. The 13th Judicial District Attorney's Office reviewed the case and declined prosecution due to insufficient evidence and the age of the incident.



UHR Identifications by DNA

- Kimo Mahi, Missing since 1992, Suspected Homicide
- Steven Overton, Missing since 2022
- Hector M. Ramirez Jr. Not Reported Missing



COLD CASE PRESS RELEASE UNSOLVED CASE “KIMO MAHI

Contact:

Shawn Perry-Turner, Director of Marketing and Communications
Office: 505-867-7640; Cell: 505-382-2753



For Immediate Release

Date: July 9, 2025

SANDOVAL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CONTINUES INVESTIGATION OF 24-YEAR-OLD UNSOLVED CASE FOR KIMO MAHI

Bernalillo, NM, July 9, 2025: *Sandoval County Sheriff's Office (SCSO)* announced today that it continues its investigation of an unsolved suspicious death case from 24 years ago. According to the Sheriff's Office, in May 2001, hikers in the Santa Fe National Forest, Sandoval County, discovered the skeletonized human remains of a then-unknown individual. Recently, because of advances in DNA technology and the work of Texas-based Othram, Inc., the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office has positively identified the deceased as **Kimo Mahi**.



KIMO MAHI

Sandoval County *Detective Donald Chewning*, who is leading the investigation, shared that Mahi's family last saw him in 1992, when he left their most recent home in Pueblo, Colorado, to drive to Albuquerque. (Kimo briefly owned a restaurant called the Hawaiian Seafood Hut in Albuquerque.) Chewning said, "Although the identification process has concluded, our investigation continues. Kimo's death is being investigated as suspicious, and we are asking for the public's help to understand what may have happened to him."

Chewning said that law enforcement recognizes that in the past, people may have been hesitant to share information because of loyalty or a concern for their safety or reputation, and that it is known that priorities and relationships change over time. "It is not too late to come forward," Chewning stressed. "Anyone with information can call the dedicated Sandoval County *Unsolved Cases* tip line, 505-867-7350, comment on the *Sandoval County Unsolved Cases Facebook page* (facebook.com/sandovalunsolved), or call the FBI tip line: 1-800-CALL-FBI (225-5324)."

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT KIMO MAHI

Kimo Mahi was born *Keeble Wofford* in 1931. According to news articles and public records, he was a man of large stature and personality, traits that helped make him a fixture in the movies and on the wrestling circuit during his early career. Later, Kimo performed odd jobs to earn a living.

According to reports, Kimo's life was transient during the 1980s and early 1990s. He lived throughout the Southwest, including Arizona, Southern California, Colorado, and New Mexico, and maintained ties in those communities. During this period, it is believed that he had access to multiple vehicles, including a white Cadillac, a brown/tan station wagon, and a pull-behind camper. None of these have ever been located.

PRSCSO171UnsolvedCasesKimoMahi07092025spt

The public is encouraged to share any information with the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office regarding *Kimo Mahi*. The tip line phone numbers are Sandoval County *Unsolved Cases* tip line, 505-867-7350 and the FBI tip-line: 1-800-CALL-FBI (225-5324).

Sandoval County, the fastest-growing county in New Mexico, encompasses 3,714 square miles of diverse geography and has a population of approximately 156,000 people. It includes the incorporated municipalities of Bernalillo, Cuba, Corrales, Jemez Springs, Rio Rancho, San Ysidro, and the Town of Cochiti Lake, as well as numerous unincorporated communities, and all or portions of 12 Indian Pueblos and Tribal Nations. For more information, visit www.sandovalcountynm.gov.

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Other photos of Kimo Mahi



PRSCSO171UnsolvedCasesKimoMahi07092025spt



STREET CRIMES & INTELLIGENCE UNIT



The Street Crimes & Intelligence Unit was established in 2019 to support the Sheriff’s mandate of combating illegal drug activity in Sandoval County, and it has proven highly effective in doing so. This multi-purpose unit is designed not only to address street-level drug trafficking but also to respond to a wide range of criminal activity.

The unit is staffed by a Lieutenant, a Sergeant, and an Investigator, and is supported by the Tactical Response Team and K-9 Unit. These specialized teams routinely assist with high-risk traffic stops, search warrant executions, and undercover operations, enhancing the unit’s overall operational capabilities.

January 2025 – December, 2025
(*Values determined by End of Year 2024 Street Prices)
***** Includes both Local and Federal Operations**



CRIMINAL ACTIVITY/SEIZED	QUANTITY/WEIGHT	STREET VALUE
STOLEN VEHICLES	0	NA
FIREARMS	7	NA
WARRANTS	17	NA
NARCOTICS- FENTANYL	1,203,650 Pills	\$3,610,950***
NARCOTICS- FENTANYL POWDER	7 Kilograms	Pending Fed assessment of value
NARCOTICS- COCAINE	0	\$0
NARCOTICS- METHAMPHETAMINE	2054.83g	\$82,193.20***
NARCOTICS- PRESCRIPTION PILLS	0	0
Narcotic Arrests (Non-Warrant Based)	1	NA
Narcotic Arrest (Warrant Based)	9	NA
		TOTAL:
		\$3,693,143.20



CIVIL DIVISION



The Sheriff's Civil Unit is supervised by a Lieutenant and staffed by a Sergeant, (2)-two deputies, (7) Court Security Officers and a civilian Clerk. The Civil Unit provides a wide variety of services for Sandoval County, these include, but not limited to:

- Acts as a messenger of the Courts in all civil matters such as service of civil process, execution of court orders and process service.
- Provides armed Law Enforcement Officers at the County Court House and adjacent county buildings, to ensure the safety of persons and property.
- Provides security for Commission Meetings and County functions.
- Responsible for the court ordered transportation and extradition of prisoners from detention facilities to and from court. Prisoner extraditions can occur as close as a neighboring County to as far as the state of New York. *"It should be noted, the amount of Court ordered transportation and extradition of prisoners from detention facilities to and from court, is a category of duties that increase every year as the County grows in population, and one reason the Civil Division has more Officers again this year as the division will continue to increase in manpower with county population growth. It should be noted the fast paced increase of multifamily residential areas and apartments in the City of Rio Rancho also significantly increases the amount of Civil issues and civil process duties.*
- The Sheriff's Civil Clerical personnel process incoming requests for service, enter them into the civil computer system and distribute process service and enforcement actions to the field deputies for completion. Clerical personnel collect money pursuant to wage garnishments, bank levies and other enforcement actions and distribute it to the judgment creditor(s) or a designee towards satisfying the judgment. Clerical personnel also process claims, stays, exemptions and bankruptcies on civil enforcement actions and communicate with the courts to determine dispositions. Clerical personnel maintain records, return writs to the court and distribute proofs of service or service attempt reports to the requester of a service or enforcement action.



K-9 UNIT



The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office established its K9 Unit in 2019. The current unit consists of Sergeant Luke Osborn, with K9 Kikin and Deputy A.J. Noriega with K9 Zarah.

Both K9s serve an invaluable role assisting the agency and others in the accomplishment of mission objectives. The superior sense of smell, hearing and apprehension abilities of a trained law enforcement canine is a valuable supplement to law enforcement manpower. Sergeant Osborn and Deputy Noriega have a strong commitment to the program. The dogs live with the family of the handler but are able to work under the most stressful situations. The dogs have an innate sense of when they will be required to assist their partner, and they look forward to coming to work.

K9 Kikin and K9 Zarah are trained in criminal apprehension, narcotic detection, and tracking. The unit train for real life applications of tracking, building searches, area searches, obedience, suspect apprehensions and anything else a patrol K9 might encounter. Both dogs are specifically trained in the tracking and trailing of serious offenders and lost children or missing persons. Kikin and Zarah are trained in searching large areas or buildings for hiding suspects, and can enter small areas that deputies would not be able to access. They are also invaluable in high-risk situations such as foot chases where the dogs' speed and tracking ability are extremely useful. The K9 unit deployed 71 times in 2025 and recorded 14 arrests and seized 5g Methamphetamine and 4.141 Kilograms of Fentanyl.

The K9 Unit also participates in numerous civilian functions each year. These include school visits and demonstrations at local civic groups, public education programs and recruiting events.

K9 Maverick "Udo", the Sheriff's Office first K9, retired at the end of 2024 after five years of service and now lives with Sergeant Osborn and his family.





SANDOVAL COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL



Sandoval County opened a new a new high-quality, climate-controlled tiny animal shelter in 2021, just in time for the alarming spike of homeless pets not only in Sandoval county but nationwide. The addition of the shelter, has significantly increased Animal Protection efforts and has proven to be a lifesaver for many pets. The shelter houses animals, on a short-term basis before they're returned to an owner or transferred to a permanent facility. The Sheriffs Office's in partnership with the Community Services Department this year has proven extremely successful in caring for impounded animals and in finding homes for animals that were taken into our custody. In 2025 Animal Control Officers handled a total of 517 calls for service.





SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION UNIT



The Sandoval County Sheriff’s Office Sex Offender Registration Enforcement (SORE) Unit, is comprised of a civilian coordinator that manages the registration, assisted by the Investigations Sergeant and Deputies in the field. The SORE Unit registers and keeps track of registered sex offenders “Approximately 161 Sex Offenders” , through registrations at the Sheriff’s Office and home verification visits. SORE also registers offenders on several pueblos. The unit assists Probation & Parole on special enforcement operations, including keeping kids safe “Halloween Operation’s”.

The New Mexico State legislature finds that sex offenders pose a significant risk of recidivism; and the efforts of law enforcement agencies to protect their communities from sex offenders are impaired by the lack of information available concerning convicted sex offenders who live within the agencies' jurisdictions. The purpose of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act is to assist law enforcement agencies' efforts to protect their communities by: requiring sex offenders who are residents of New Mexico to register with the county sheriff of the county in which the sex offender resides; requiring sex offenders who are residents in other states, but who are employed in New Mexico or who attend school in New Mexico, to register with the county sheriff of the county in which the sex offender works or attends school; requiring the establishment of a central registry for sex offenders; and providing public access to information regarding certain registered sex offenders.



COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM



The Community Relations Team is committed to improving the quality of life within Sandoval County. Many strategies are utilized to fulfill this commitment, including a strong partnership with Patrol Deputies, Traffic Deputies, Detectives, School Resource Deputy, various civilian employees, and supervisors depending on the task. Community Relations Team also works hand in hand with Sandoval County Community Services and the County Public Information Officer.

The team's primary mission is to encourage the concept of partnerships between the Sheriff's Office and the community. Community Relations Team members work with residents, homeowners' associations, citizen advocates, Neighborhood Watch and various community agencies to identify and address problematic issues.

The bond between the citizens and the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office has always been strong and united; with prevention, problem solving and communication between citizens and deputies being key to protecting our community from crime and its consequences.





EMERGENCY SERVICES TEAM (EST)



The **Emergency Services Team (EST)** is a specialized unit composed of highly trained deputies who respond to law enforcement situations that exceed the capabilities of standard patrol operations. The EST is deployed when circumstances present a reasonable belief that the potential for violence is significantly greater than what officers typically encounter during the normal and lawful execution of their duties.

Each EST member is required to complete a minimum 60-hour Basic S.W.A.T. certification course. This training includes instruction in special weapons applications, tactical operations for the apprehension of violent individuals, use-of-force principles, less-lethal weapons and munitions, search and rescue techniques, and the deployment of chemical agents.

In addition to the basic certification, members receive advanced training in defensive tactics, tactical firearms proficiency, building entry techniques, suspect tracking across various terrains, land navigation and orientation, and the management of sustained operations in rural or compromised urban environments. These skills are also applied during Search and Rescue (SAR) missions.

EST members serve in other roles within the agency and are activated as a team only when specialized response is required. Selection for the EST requires successful completion of a rigorous physical agility assessment, advanced firearms qualification standards, and comprehensive work-performance evaluations





SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM



Traditionally, Sheriff's Patrol deputies are the first to respond to reports of lost or missing persons. Search and Rescue (SAR) operations are often dynamic, requiring constant adaptation to changing conditions and close collaboration among multiple emergency response agencies, including Law Enforcement, Fire Services, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and various state and volunteer organizations.

In 2019, the Sheriff mandated the creation of a dedicated Search and Rescue Team to enhance the agency's ability to coordinate and collaborate effectively during emergencies. Team members support deputies in the field by serving as coordinators, resource managers, and subject-matter experts. Upon arrival at a scene, a SAR Team member assumes the role of Incident Commander for the Sheriff's Office.

Each team member maintains access to comprehensive resource contact lists, including specialized units within the Sheriff's Office—such as Tactical Tracking Teams and K-9 Units—as well as external agency resources like Air Support and High Angle Rescue teams. Depending on the size and complexity of the incident, additional team members are assigned specific roles and responsibilities, all focused on delivering expertise that contributes to a successful rescue outcome.

The Sheriff's Office and Sandoval County Fire Department & Emergency Management have also implemented a cross-training program in the use of drones for emergency response. Cross-trained personnel can respond rapidly to both law enforcement and fire-related incidents, deploying one or more drones to provide real-time situational awareness. This capability enhances operational effectiveness by identifying hazards, reducing risks to first responders, and delivering live aerial footage to SAR teams, which helps pinpoint the location of missing individuals. These advancements significantly improve response times and can make a critical, life-saving difference.

Due to the increased recreational use of the Rio Grande River in Sandoval County, particularly during summer months and holidays, water-related emergencies have also risen. To address this, deputies trained in Swift Water Rescue partner with the Sandoval County Fire Department to improve safety during recreational activities and ensure a rapid, coordinated response to water emergencies.



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS



The Professional Standards Unit is an internal administrative investigations unit staffed with personnel who report directly to the Undersheriff and Sheriff. Lieutenant John Casteneda oversees the day to day operations of receiving, tracking and managing the case load of complaints and compliments. To ensure the public's trust and maintain the Offices' integrity, this unit conducts immediate and objective investigations of all complaints. It is essential that all allegations of employee misconduct are thoroughly and objectively investigated to assure the public that official misconduct will not be tolerated and, at the same time, provide a vehicle whereby officers unjustly accused can be vindicated. Lieutenant Casteneda handles the majority of complaints that are based on a misunderstanding of accepted law enforcement practices or the duties of the officer or other agency member. Many times, this type of complaint is quickly resolved after speaking with a supervisor and the citizen filing the complaint. When lengthy, complex or serious allegations of employee misconduct are alleged, Lieutenant Casteneda is assisted by supervisory staff that serves in other capacities within the agency. All assisting staff have extensive criminal and administrative investigation expertise and training. In 2022 the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office fully implemented the use of Body Worn Cameras. The cameras have proven invaluable in recording deputy's actions, resolving complainants and providing transparency. The majority of Deputies favor wearing the body-worn cameras which has proven to keep good deputies safe from false and malicious complaints and document the great job the deputies do for the community. Another function of the Professional Standards Unit is to investigate risk management issues, conduct internal audits concerning appropriate use of force standards, vehicle driving issues and other department policies and functions. The unit also works in cooperation with the County Attorney and reviews matters of civil liability for the Sheriff's Office and other county entities.

Standards provide a measure for accountability. Sheriff Deputies are appointed by the Sheriff and exercise extraordinary authority over their fellow citizens. This responsibility requires accountability. Accountability is achieved by imposing high standards of conduct on police, including through a discipline code which deputies voluntarily accept upon their appointment. These higher standards apply to conduct both on and off-duty. Sheriff Deputies want to both be seen as professional, not just for their own satisfaction, but to enjoy public confidence that is necessary for democratic policing to succeed. It may be more so now, when law enforcement is under consistent scrutiny. The Sheriff believes fostering and promoting a sense of professionalism strengthens the relationship and trust between the citizens of Sandoval County and the Sheriff's Office.



SHERIFF'S FLEET MANAGEMENT & EQUIPMENT UNIT



The primary function of the "Sheriff's Fleet Management & Equipment Unit" is to provide:

- Sheriff's Office employees with safe and reliable vehicles so they can more effectively perform their duties, responding to emergencies and providing quality police service to those who live and work in Sandoval County and surrounding areas.
- Sheriff's Office employees with uniforms, protective equipment, materials, and other "police specific" equipment. Makes equipment and supply purchases and maintains inventory records. Identifies and evaluates "police specific" equipment and technologies that are the most effective, safe, functioning and long lasting.

The Sheriff's Fleet Management & Equipment Unit is under the supervision of a Lieutenant with a Deputy assigned as the Fleet & Equipment Coordinator. The Sheriff's Office's fleet includes marked Patrol vehicles, Command vehicles, Investigations and Administrative vehicles. In addition, the Sheriff's Office has support, utility, tactical and Search and Rescue equipment. The Coordinator is responsible for many aspects involving our vehicles, including assisting Fiscal Year budgeting, acquisition, licensing, insurance, emergency equipment up-fitting, preventative maintenance and repair. In addition, the coordinator handles fleet related equipment and supplies, vehicle driver assignments and rotation, to ensure the most efficient and effective long term use of each of our vehicles. The coordinator is also responsible for the general oversight of the Sheriff's Office's equipment and supply function, to include, issuing equipment and other supplies to department personnel, identifying and evaluating "police specific" equipment, making equipment and supply purchases, and maintaining inventory records. The Sheriff's Fleet Management & Equipment Unit also assists administrative personnel with the oversight and inventory of other department assets as needed.





TRAINING AND SAFETY COORDINATOR



The Sheriff and Undersheriff recognize that effective law enforcement is a cornerstone in the protection of our constitutional rights; and the mission of law enforcement is not only to protect and serve, but to operate in an efficient, effective manner that is in the best interest of the community we serve.

The Training and Safety Coordinator works under the supervision of the Sheriff. Duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

TRAINING

Coordinates and assists with:

- NMLEA Biennium Training & Training through the department's Virtual Academy program.
- Training in the field and classroom setting & Continuing Professional Training and other training programs as assigned.
- Education programs related to the Sheriff's Office and the community.
- Implementing training goals and objectives set by the Sheriff's Office as assigned.
- Maintaining Training Request Routing and Processing Procedures as set by the Chief Deputy.
- Monitoring and making recommendations to command staff for remedial training.
- Conducting research, schedules training, prepares training materials as assigned.
- Performs a variety of administrative, professional, and technical tasks in support of the assigned area of responsibility.
- Accurately maintain and update records and files both in house and with NMLEA.

SAFETY

- Participates as a liaison between the Sheriff's Office and Sandoval County Risk Management
- Issues Risk Awareness Program training on a weekly basis & maintains records and required documentation to Risk Management
- Attends Risk Management meetings as a committee member
- Complies with OSHA rules and standards regarding the Sheriff's Office Building.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE AND POLICY UPDATE

Updates outdated written procedures and policies to reflect "Best Police Practice" that are constitutional, effective, reduce liability and improve communication, skills, knowledge, ethics, and attitudes that will improve overall policing of the community.



COLD CASE SPOTLIGHT




SANDOVAL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE SEEKS HELP IN IDENTIFYING WOMAN FOUND TWO YEARS AGO IN THE PLACITAS, NM AREA

This unsolved suspicious death case is moving forward based on new information

Bernalillo, NM, April 17, 2025: The Sandoval County Sheriff's Office held a Media Event today to seek the public's help in identifying **Sandoval Star**, a woman found deceased two years ago in the Placitas, NM, area. At the Media Event, **Sheriff Jesse James Casaus** said, "We are committed to properly identifying this young woman, named *Sandoval Star* by the FBI, who was found deceased two years ago under a bridge in the Cibola National Forest. She became our responsibility the day she was discovered. That day she became a member of the Sandoval County community, and today, we are asking all surrounding communities to assist in our efforts to bring closure to her family and to this case. Thank you in advance for your help."

HOW YOU CAN HELP

There is a dedicated tip line in the Sheriff's Office for *Unsolved Cases*. The phone number is **505-867-7350**. All messages will be returned. There is a Facebook page, *Sandoval County Unsolved Cases* (facebook.com/sandovalunsolved), and messages and comments can be left there. Also, information can be shared on the FBI tip line: **1-800-CALL FBI**. According to Orthram Inc., Woodlands, TX, which performed the forensic genetic genealogy testing, persons with family origins in Mexico, Central America, or the Andean regions of South America, particularly those with Indigenous ancestry, who are missing a loved one, are encouraged to come forward.


Federal Bureau of Investigation  Violent Criminal Apprehension Program

VICAP ALERT

UNIDENTIFIED HUMAN REMAINS / SEEKING INFORMATION

Attention: Missing Persons / Violent Crime / Cold Case / Crime Analysis Units

Unidentified Human Remains
A.K.A. "Sandoval Star"



Facial Reconstruction March 2025

Date Recovered: 04/18/2023	Recovery Location: Placitas, NM
Sex: Female	Age: 15 – 30 years old
Hair: Brown	Height / Weight: 5'2" / 95 lbs.
NamUs #: UP122486	Agency Case #: 23-000623

On 04/18/2023, the remains of an unknown female were discovered partially submerged in a creek underneath a bridge on Highway 165 near milepost 10 within the Cibola National Forest in Placitas, NM. The victim was determined to be of Latin American decent, between 15 – 30 years old, 5'2", and weighed approximately 95 pounds. The victim was wearing a sports-bra, black shorts, and dark blue shirt with red stars. The victim's cause of death is undetermined.

Genetic analysis conducted in April 2025 determined the victim to have ancestral ties to Mexico, Central America, and the Andes region of South America.

Investigators are asking anyone with information regarding the case or identification of the victim to contact them.

To provide or request additional information, please contact:
 - Detective Donald Chewing, Sandoval County Sheriff's Office, NM,
 (505) 867-7326, Ext 1811, dchewing@sandovalcounty.nm.gov -
 - FBI VICAP, (800) 634-4097, vicap@fbi.gov -

Alert # 2025-05-01; Released 03/13/2025; CTD
 To review other VICAP Alerts, please visit www.fbi.gov/wanted/vicap



COLD CASE SPOTLIGHT



The Sheriff's Office is currently working several cold cases, including the 47-year-old murder of Mary Aleta "Molly" Sparks. Sparks, 21, was from Albuquerque and was a recent graduate from the University of New Mexico. She was last seen on July 23, 1975, at Rosa's Cantina in Algodones, New Mexico, where she was to meet with friends and fellow members of an all-female rugby team. Her body was found in a drainage ditch west of the bar on July 24, 1975. The cause of death was blunt force trauma to her head and neck, with possible strangulation. After decades of no leads, the FBI and Sandoval County Sheriff's Deputies are working together to solve the case.



SEEKING INFORMATION

MARY ALETA "MOLLY" SPARKS

Homicide Victim
Algodones, New Mexico
July 23-24, 1975







Photograph taken circa 1974 or 1975



Photograph taken in 1977

DESCRIPTION

Alias: "Molly"	Date(s) of Birth Used: March 29, 1954	Place of Birth: Albuquerque, New Mexico
Hair: Brown	Weight: 140 pounds	Height: 5'6"
Race: White		Sex: Female
		Nationality: American

DETAILS

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Albuquerque Field Office, along with the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office in New Mexico, are seeking the public's assistance in identifying the circumstances surrounding the homicide of Mary Aleta "Molly" Sparks in 1975.

Sparks, 21, was last seen on July 23, 1975, between 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. at Rosa's Cantina in Algodones, New Mexico, where she was to meet with friends and fellow members of an all-female rugby team.

Her body was found in a drainage ditch west of the bar on July 24, 1975. The cause of death was blunt force trauma to her head and neck, with possible strangulation.

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Albuquerque

IN MEMORIAM

Lieutenant Jason Benally, born on May 30, 1973, served his community as a Law Enforcement Officer almost his entire adult life. Jason started his law enforcement career when he was 20 years old as a student investigator with Navajo Nation Criminal Investigations. At 22 years old, Jason became a UNM Police Officer and served at UNM until he joined the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy in December of 2002. Jason had a passion for traffic and criminal investigations and served as the Sheriff's Office Fatal Crash Team Supervisor, almost from the day he joined the Sheriff's Office. Jason was promoted to Corporal in July of 2003 and to Sergeant in March 2006. As a Sergeant, Jason supervised Traffic, Criminal Investigations and other specialized units within the Sheriff's Office. In June of 2011, Jason was promoted to Lieutenant. In his 10 plus years as a Lieutenant, Jason basically worked or was assigned at one time or another over every unit or division of the Sheriff's Office due to his overall general skill and ability as a Law Enforcement supervisor. Sadly, he passed away on November 29, 2023. Jason will always be remembered as a friend, and exemplary leader and a trusted colleague and will be missed more than words can express.





END OF WATCH



Joseph “Joe” Anthony Harris, Sr. was born in South Ozone Park, Brooklyn, New York to Arthur and Helen Harris. He grew up on Long Island with his big Italian family. In the late 1970s, he moved to New Mexico with his parents and finished school at Cibola High School. In 1984 he joined the Rio Rancho Police Department and was one of the original Rio Rancho Police Officers. Harris was cross trained in Law Enforcement/Fire Fighting and EMT. While at RRPD He started the D.A.R.E. program, the G.R.E.A.T. program, Neighborhood Watch, Mc Gruff the Crime Dog, and worked with the Citizen Police Academy and any other program he could bring to the department that had to do with community safety. Sergeant Harris served with the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office for six years prior to his untimely death. While serving with Sandoval County, he started the D.A.R.E. program and was very instrumental in expanding Neighborhood Watch programs throughout the county.



Sergeant Harris was killed, while working a Sheriff’s Office stakeout targeting the “Cookie Bandit”, who was an unidentified suspect in cabin burglaries in the Jemez area for over 6 years. Sergeant Harris, during the arrest, although mortally wounded by gunfire was able to return fire and kill the “Cookie Bandit” who was later identified as Joseph Henry Burgess wanted for a double homicide in Canada. Burgess is also a potential suspect for other murders in New Mexico, California, Arizona, and Oregon, and had eluded Law Enforcement for over 40 years.

He is survived by his wife and five children and is buried at Vista Verde Memorial Park in Rio Rancho, New Mexico.



END OF WATCH



Robert W. Baron was born on September 10, 1966 to James Bernard and Karola Baron of Simi Valley, California. He graduated from California State, Northridge with a BA in Political Science and Public Administration. Early in his career Baron worked as a Juvenile Probation Officer in Los Angeles County. Prior to moving to New Mexico Baron worked as a Wildland Firefighter and as a Federal Park Service Ranger. As a Federal Park Ranger, Robert received the “Exemplary Act Award” for his quick actions in saving the life of a park visitor who suffered a major heart attack. Robert joined the Sandoval County Sheriff’s Office in 2006 and was a dedicated Deputy, Detective and Sergeant, and he had a passion for improving the Sheriff’s Office. Assigned as a Detective, he was extremely diligent, hardworking, always answered the call and was conscientious of victims and their families while working all cases regardless of their seemingly insignificant importance or their high profile nature of a case, such as homicide. Robert loved his community, church and helping others. He dedicated time as a Boy Scout leader mentoring scouts and in law enforcement organizations such as Law Enforcement United, an organization committed to "Honor the Fallen, and Remember the Survivors.” He participated in the in the 2010, 250+ mile Memorial Bicycle Ride ending in Washington D.C. Memorial, in memory of Sgt. Joe Harris in 2010.



On December 5, 2013, Robert had been dispatched to I-25 in response to reports of multiple, minor motor vehicle crashes and disabled vehicles under blizzard conditions. He was fatally injured when he was outside of his vehicle and struck by a motorist while assisting motorists and investigating the crashes.

He had served in law enforcement for a total of 25 years and is survived by his wife and son.



END OF WATCH



Deputy Dennis Coulter was born to Charles and Vurlma Coulter on August 7, 1965. Dennis was the very embodiment of the words Protect and Serve, and not only in his police work, but in every aspect of his life. He began his adult career working with various construction and tile companies in New Mexico, perfecting his craft and becoming known for his exceptional craftsmanship. In 2011 he joined the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy, fulfilling a lifelong dream to serve in Law Enforcement.

Dennis' life was one of service, active with Sagebrush Church in Albuquerque, dedicated whether it was standing in support of someone during times of great need, conducting repairs on his mother's home, or rescuing a frightened kitty lying in the middle of the road, Dennis was always available for those in need. Dennis was a man of his word, honorable, hardworking, dedicated, and had a deep love for those close to him. He was a loyal and steadfast friend and was held in great respect and esteem by his fellow deputies.



On March 25, 2022 at approximately 10:53pm, Deputy Coulter was in the Sheriff's Office parking where he was discovered on the ground, unconscious and not breathing. Multiple agencies arrived and attempted to resuscitate Deputy Coulter. Sadly, Deputy Dennis Coulter, 56, passed away as the result of the medical episode at Sandoval Regional Medical Center on March 26, 2022 at 12:07 am.

Dennis is survived by his wife of almost 24 years, Vanessa, along with his mother, his three sisters, and his brother. Dennis is also survived by 5 nieces, 2 nephews, 6 great-nieces, 3 great-nephews, and a multitude of friends. Dennis's passing is a heartbreaking loss to the Sandoval County Sheriff's Office, the Law Enforcement community, and the citizens of Sandoval County.