

OFFICE OF THE
SHERIFF
INYO COUNTY, CA



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"A Professional Service Agency"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALLIED AGENCY INCIDENT 8.24.2020

PEARSONVILLE, CA, August 25, 2020 – On August 24 shortly after 2:00pm Inyo County Sheriff's Deputies were dispatched to the area just north of Pearsonville on Highway 395, regarding a report of a man brandishing a firearm. The reporting party indicated that a white male wearing a straw hat, light colored flannel long sleeve shirt, cargo pants and brown colored hiking boots had approached them on foot out of the desert area near Sterling Road. The man said, "Que pasa," to the party who had pulled over to change a flat tire. The party explained that they didn't speak Spanish, and the man walked away. Moments later the man returned and stood on the opposite side Highway 395. The reporting party observed the male lay down on the ground holding a rifle pointed at the vehicle. The reporting party was alarmed and fired a warning shot from a registered handgun in the air to try and scare off the male. The reporting party described being afraid for their lives, and began to slowly drive away southbound without finishing the change of the flat tire.

Further description of the individual with the gun revealed that the suspect was Matthew David Hays, a 35-year old man known to law enforcement. Deputies arrived on scene near Hays' residence; moments later Hays appeared from his trailer. Deputies observed Hays holding a black colored rifle with a scope. Numerous announcements were made to drop the firearm. At one point, Hays began running towards law enforcement while holding the rifle and continued holding the rifle at the low ready position with the muzzle end of the rifle slightly raised. Hays eventually began walking off north-westerly into the desert.

A CHP helicopter responded and observed Hays in the desert, still with a rifle. However, the helicopter was forced to refuel and lost sight of Hays. Mutual aid was requested with Kern County Sheriff's Office SWAT team along with Inyo County SED team. After SWAT and SED arrived on scene, a search of the area was conducted but the suspect could not be located. A search of an abandoned building nearby revealed the rifle and the suspect's clothing. A search of the suspect's residence was also conducted with a search warrant. The search resulted in the recovery of several pellet gun rifles and one bb handgun from the suspect's residence.

A search of the vast area was conducted to locate the suspect. Due to the expansive territory and night time conditions, the search did not locate the suspect. An arrest warrant has been issued for the subject. The suspect is described as a white male, 6'2", 165 pounds, brown hair, blue eyes. The public is strongly encouraged to contact the Inyo County Sheriff's Office at 760-878-0383, option 4, if anyone has any information that can lead to the arrest of Matthew David Hays

The Inyo County Sheriff's Office extends its appreciation to the following agencies that assisted last night: Kern County SO, CHP, BLM, Forest Service LEO, Liberty Ambulance, and Olancho Volunteer Fire Department.

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