



# CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TOP FIVE CHP STORIES OF THE WEEK**

*#ICYMI: This week, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) made headlines with several notable incidents, including a heroic rescue by a CHP officer saving a pilot moments before an explosion, CHP's ORCTF achieving record-breaking success in 2024, CHP K-9 seizing 9 pounds of methamphetamine, Santa Fe Spring CHP officers arresting 6 suspects for multiple felonies, and CHP Fresno receiving Frosty CHP Snowman photo from Louisiana State Police.*



The list below includes the headline (with a link to the full text) and an excerpt from each announcement. Click on the headlines to access accompanying assets that are available for download.

## **1. HEROIC RESCUE: CHP OFFICER SAVES PILOT MOMENTS BEFORE EXPLOSION**

On January 29, 2025. Officer Ayala was conducting a routine enforcement stop on Los Carneros Road, just north of US 101, when an explosion rocked the air. Startled, he saw an aircraft's ballistic recovery system deployed. He observed the plane's deployed parachute. A small aircraft had crashed in an empty field just beyond the road.

Without hesitation, Officer Ayala abandoned the traffic stop, letting the driver go without issuing a citation. He immediately entered northbound US 101 and, as he approached the crash site, saw the crashed plane engulfed in flames. Realizing time was critical, he pulled over onto the right shoulder, jumped a chain-link freeway perimeter fence, and sprinted toward the burning aircraft. As he made emergency notifications, calling for the Santa Barbara County Fire Department and ambulance, the smell of burning fuel filled the air. He spotted movement and observed the severely injured pilot crawling out of the aircraft. The fire was spreading rapidly and threatening to consume the wreckage entirely.

He grabbed the pilot's arms and pulled with all his strength, dragging the injured pilot away from the growing flames. Just as they stumbled a few yards to safety, an explosion erupted behind them. The plane was now fully engulfed in flames. The plane's passenger managed to self-extricate from the aircraft. Two civilians rushed in to assist Officer Ayala. Officer Ayala directed one civilian to help the woman to safety while the other civilian remained on the scene for emergency services.

## **2. CHP'S ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME TASK FORCE ACHIEVED RECORD-BREAKING SUCCESS IN 2024**

The California Highway Patrol's Organized Retail Crime Task Force (ORCTF) achieved unprecedented results in 2024, marking a new high in investigations, arrests, and the recovery of stolen goods since its inauguration in 2019. Throughout 2024, the ORCTF's efforts produced impressive figures: 879 investigations were conducted, 1,707 arrests were made, more than 676,000 stolen items were retrieved, and confiscated goods were worth an estimated \$13.5 million. From 2022, enhanced funding allowed the CHP to extend its operations throughout the state, ameliorating its dedicated team of investigators and reinforcing proactive crime prevention protocols. During the recent holiday season, the ORCTF collaborated with local law enforcement agencies and over 50 retailers to safeguard consumers, businessmen, and retail neighborhoods across California. Their conspicuous presence effectively deterred criminal activities and facilitated immediate arrests of retail criminals.

**3. CHP K-9 SEIZES NINE POUNDS OF METHAMPHETAMINE IN SHASTA COUNTY**

On January 27, a K-9 Officer from our Northern Division and K-9 Riva conducted a traffic stop on a black Honda Accord on eastbound SR-44 in Shingletown, California, due to observed traffic violations. Recognizing signs of potential criminal activity upon interacting with the driver, K-9 Riva was deployed to perform a free-air sniff. The K-9 subsequently alerted to the presence of suspected narcotics within the vehicle. A thorough search resulted in the discovery of approximately nine pounds of methamphetamine.

**4. CHP SANTA FE SPRINGS OFFICERS ARREST SIX FOR MULTIPLE FELONIES**

On the evening of January 24, amid simultaneous assignments handling the Palisade and Eaton fires, our dedicated CHP Santa Fe Springs Area officers responded to a report of individuals brandishing firearms on northbound I-605, north of Telegraph Road. Despite the challenges, they managed to identify the suspect vehicle and execute a high-risk stop, successfully apprehending six individuals. Subsequent investigations yielded five firearms equipped with extended magazines, burglary tools, and stolen U.S. Department of Treasury checks with considerable value. These items have been recovered and are currently held as evidence. We are proud to serve our community and always uphold its safety.

**5. CHP FRESNO RECEIVES FROSTY CHP SNOWMAN PHOTO FROM LOUISIANA STATE POLICE**

On January 24, we received this remarkable image from one of our great sister agencies, the Louisiana State Police. In an unanticipated display of winter in southeast Louisiana, their officers reimagined Frosty as a California Highway Patrol snowman in Houma! Although rare for this part of the state, the snow lends a remarkable view. We all understand the environmental importance of more snow in our local Sierra Nevada mountains, and the dedication of these officers shows a sense of unity in these challenging times—big thanks to Sgt. Ross Brennan and TFC Tiah Larvadain of the Louisiana State Police for spreading some good luck and positive weather vibes our way.

The mission of the CHP is to provide the highest level of Safety, Service, and Security.

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