

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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CONTACT: Detective Sergeant John Ampol at jampol@pd.sandiego.gov

SDPD Investigating Illegal Practices by S&S Towing in the City of San Diego

INVESTIGATORS SEEKING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN UNLAWFULLY TOWED IN PAST 3 YEARS

San Diego – The San Diego Police Department (SDPD) is looking for additional information from anyone who believes they may have been victims of illegal towing practices by S&S Towing in the City of San Diego over the last three years.

Last Spring, the City Attorney's Affirmative Civil Enforcement (ACE) Unit received complaints about unfair business practices by S&S Towing primarily in immigrant communities and launched an internal investigation. The ACE Unit interviewed victims and witnesses, researched S&S's business operations, and inspected its tow yard. After confirming predatory practices were occurring, the ACE Unit referred the matter to SDPD for potential criminal prosecution.

In May, the City Attorney's Office invited those who had claims against S&S Towing to meet with its investigators and lawyers, as well as SDPD's Traffic Division. Investigators learned that S&S Towing was violating the laws required to lawfully impound vehicles and additional regulations to store and release these vehicles.

SDPD is continuing to work closely with the City Attorney's Office and the San Diego District Attorney's Office to investigate these, and other potentially related crimes committed by S&S Towing.

On Monday, August 5, SDPD executed a search warrant on S&S Towing at 4182 El Cajon Blvd. While attempting to serve the search warrant connected to unlawful towing, a tow truck driver ran into the

parking lot of an auto dealership and pulled a gun on himself. After attempts by SDPD Emergency Negotiators to peacefully resolve the incident, the tow truck driver shot himself. Officers rendered medical aid, but the driver was pronounced deceased at the scene.

Although SDPD already has several victims they are working with on the investigation, the Department believes there may be more victims in the City of San Diego.

The State of California has comprehensive laws regulating the towing industry. A private towing company may not remove a vehicle from a public roadway without proper authorization from law enforcement personnel.

You may be a victim of S&S Towing's illegal acts if:

- Your vehicle was towed from a legally parked area by S&S Towing.
- The tow truck driver refused to release your vehicle on-site – meaning it hadn't yet been removed from private property and was NOT in transit.
- The tow truck driver asked for payment of more than half of the regular towing charge after it was already hooked up to the tow truck or other towing device and you returned and requested it be released.
- The tow truck driver or company refused to accept a credit card as a form of payment and would only accept cash.
- The owner of the vehicle is not provided a photocopy of the written authorization.
- The owner is not provided a notice with information regarding reporting of wrongful towing.

If you believe your vehicle has been unlawfully towed by S&S Towing, please contact SDPD's Traffic Special Investigations Unit at TowingFraudReport@pd.sandiego.gov.

REPORTING OTHER TOWING VIOLATIONS

Additionally, you may file a complaint with the ACE Unit using an online form:

<https://sandiego.seamlessdocs.com/f/acetowingcomplaint>

Victims may also wish to take immediate steps to protect or enforce their rights. Two services may assist in pursuing a private remedy: Small Claims Court 858-634-1919 and Lawyers Referral Service 619-231-8585.

Vehicle owners who are towed in violation of these laws may sue the property owner or their agent, the tow company, and the storage yard for damages of up to four times the towing and storage charges. Motorists can bring such actions for up to \$12,500 without hiring an attorney in Small Claims Court. The Court has a free legal advisor to assist individuals with filing a case. For more information, visit the court's website at www.sdcourt.ca.gov.

For additional information on unlawful towing, please visit www.sandiego.gov/police/services/vehicle-impounds-towing/know-your-rights.

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