



BERKELEY POLICE DEPARTMENT

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****For Immediate Release****

Disabled Placard Abuse Leads to Arrests

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Berkeley, California (February 17, 2006) In recent weeks, eight (8) persons were arrested for fraudulent use of a disabled placard in the City Of Berkeley. As a result of complaints from persons with disabilities, the Berkeley Police Department Traffic Bureau conducted a creative problem solving enforcement project to address this possible abuse. Using five (5) members of the traffic team in plain clothes, as well as a uniformed motor officer and motor sergeant, they set out on 02/09/06 and 02/15/06 in the early morning hours.

During the course of the projects that focused on the South Campus area, close to the University of California, officers contacted over forty (40) persons as they parked and displayed a disabled placard or as they returned to their cars that had a placard displayed. The primary complaint was that seemingly able-bodied persons were using disabled placards in order to park for free for any length of time at City Of Berkeley meters.

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) issues disabled placards to persons who apply and meet the criteria. A number is assigned to the placard, along with a registration type card. These placards can only be used by the persons that they have been granted to, or by those who are transporting and/or picking up that disabled person. A simple computer check done by an officer can verify the name of the individual that the placard is intended for. The eight persons were cited for violation of California Vehicle Code 4461©, a misdemeanor that carries fines up to \$1,000.

Enforcement projects like this one are not new to the BPD Traffic Bureau. In recent years, the unit has been responsible for conducting dozens of projects focusing on pedestrian right of way violations, meter theft and meter tampering. Undercover officers and decoys have been employed in the bulk of this work. Their undertakings have yielded countless citations and arrests.