



News Release

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OHV Park Superintendent Curtis Itogawa Thwarts Suicide Try

California State Parks Superintendent Curtis Itogawa of the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) is credited with talking a potential suicide victim out of taking his life, an action lauded by State Parks Director Rusty Areias.

"I am proud of the superintendent's handling of what could have been a very disastrous situation, and the fact that he was able to obtain the needed help for this individual," said Areias.

The distraught man was armed with a California Highway Patrol model .357-magnum handgun, which Itogawa said the man held to his forehead for several minutes before Itogawa persuaded him to surrender the weapon.

"It was obvious this young man was intent on killing himself. He had a picture of his family and he pointed his weapon at his forehead," Itogawa said. "I had to move from the cover of my vehicle to better communicate with this young man. I knew I was giving up my physical safety and exposing myself, well within his weapon's range. But I had to get his confidence, or else he would use that gun on himself."

Itogawa said once the man lowered the weapon, it took him another 30 minutes to persuade the man to meet him halfway down the hill on which they were talking so that the unidentified man could be taken to get the help he needed.

"In the end, no one got hurt and the young man got the help he needed," the superintendent said. Itogawa said the man was taken to Imperial County mental health facilities for an evaluation.

"For people who really know me, the most amazing thing about this whole event is that I talked for an hour-and-a-half. I normally speak very little, and I would prefer to let my actions speak for me," he said.

The incident occurred in the SVRA on June 27. Ocotillo Wells is one of eight state vehicular recreation areas managed by the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division of California State Parks.

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