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To: Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force Community

Recently, it has been brought to the attention of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF) that certain anti-trafficking organizations are condoning and, in some cases, actually training private citizens how to perform surveillances on potential human trafficking locations and/or trafficking suspects. There have been television programs recently, as well, showing citizens performing self-initiated surveillances of potential trafficking locations and/or businesses.

The Westminster Police Department does not use or train private citizens to perform any type of surveillances regarding criminal activities. Effective surveillances require specialized training, are dependent on participants having extensive law enforcement experience, and involve a number of personal risks. Surveillances of possible human trafficking criminal enterprises, which have been known to be involved with transnational drug trafficking, weapons trafficking, and street gangs, can be especially hazardous. In addition, the potential dangers of surveillance operations can affect the safety of trafficking victims, as well.

Because of the high risks to citizens, the community, and trafficking victims, the Westminster Police Department and the OCHTTF do not endorse private citizens performing criminal surveillances or training private citizens to perform criminal surveillances.

The Westminster Police Department and the OCHTTF do applaud efforts by citizens and anti-trafficking groups to increase awareness and provide information about human slavery. The OCHTTF encourages community members to use the national human trafficking hotline (1-888-3737-888) to phone in suspicious activity that may be related to human trafficking or contact their local police or sheriff's department and report suspicious activity. We encourage concerned groups and individuals to partner with the federally supported OCHTTF and help us make a more significant impact to end human slavery in our communities.

Sincerely,

Andrew E. Hall
Chief of Police



Service with Integrity