

Today's Top Stories [WATCH NOW](#)

EYEWITNESS
NEWS



[GO](#)



54° Los Angeles, CA
CLEAR [EDIT](#)

SECTIONS

TRAFFIC

WATCH

FLY-AND-GO-SEEK.
 Most nonstops from the West Coast at nonstop low prices.
 Compared to other airlines, based on full year schedule



Alaska
 LET'S FLY

SOCIETY

How LA law enforcement deals with mental health population despite lack of resources

Share Tweet Email

EMBED </> MORE VIDEOS

Eyewitness News examined the dangers of mental illness on Los Angeles streets and how law enforcement is evolving to deal with it.

By **David Ono**

Friday, February 09, 2018

LOS ANGELES (KABC) -- Eyewitness News examined the dangers of mental illness on Los Angeles streets and how law enforcement is evolving to deal with it.

Security video from two weeks ago showed a large, strong man who suffers from bipolar disorder show up outside of the Lakewood sheriff's substation with what appeared to be a violent intent.

RECOMMENDED



Everything At This Online Grocery Store Costs \$3

Delish.com



Larchmont, New York: This Brilliant, Young Company Is Disrupting a \$200...

EverQuote



Born Before 1985? New York Will Pay \$355/Month Off Your Mortgage (You Must...

ImproveMortgage.com



Do You Know These 8 Things About Asthma?

Health Central



Flightulence: Passenger passing gas prompts fight, emergency landing



VIDEO: Hail pelts Beverly Hills amid winter weather in SoCal

Recommended by

"He had an improvised weapon that he had tied a rope around his waist and at the end of the rope was a large brick," L.A. County sheriff's Lt. Eric Castano said.

Castano was there, and with three decades of experience and constant training, he knew the man wasn't a criminal, but someone in distress.

"This was a mental health situation and although he had the brick, the goal was to try to help him," he said.

He added that the deputies were setting up a way to deal with the man in a way they were trained to do. They created distance and one deputy did all the talking, Castano said.

But the situation is far more complicated and dangerous. The young man had doused himself with gasoline and he had a lighter in his left hand. While it can't be seen in the video, he was sparking the lighter on his thigh.

"So when that happened, of course, it became a critical incident, an immediate critical incident," Castano said.

Dealing with the mentally ill has become a critical yet controversial part of law enforcement. Mental health experts said it shouldn't be this way.

"They need treatment in life to get back on track and be productive members of society as opposed to being put into constraining, punitive environments," said Dr. Jonathan Sherin, with the L.A. County Department of Mental Health.

But resources to help the mentally ill are severely



SOCIETY



82-year-old grandmother commits suicide after falling for scam

Updated 1 hr 13 mins ago



More than 1,200 new citizens sworn in at OC ceremony



7-day planner



Cinemark's new policy bans large bags in theaters



Rev. Billy Graham had strong link to Forest Falls in IE

MORE SOCIETY

TOP STORIES

underfunded. As a result, there are not enough clinics and beds. So eventually they end up on our streets and then filling jails when all they need is a doctor.

Over the last five years, the population of mentally ill in the L.A. County Jail has increased by 49 percent.

"That's a dramatic increase in a very difficult population, in a population that I would argue should not be treated in a jail facility," L.A. County Sheriff Jim McDonnell said.

He added that jails were never supposed to be used this way.

"So by default we have become the largest mental institution in America," McDonnell said.

But until things change, it is deputies who will be on the front lines dealing with the mentally ill. The deputies train, role play and learn to assess and think quickly. So when they're faced with a dangerous situation, such as the man doused in gasoline, they can act humanely and with compassion.

The young man was not hurt or arrested when the tense situation came to an end, but he was taken to a hospital where he is getting help.

Most law enforcement experts said policing criminals is hard enough, but adding mental illness to their responsibilities can make the job exponentially more difficult.

Without the proper funding for medical help as well as drug addiction escalating, it's a problem that is going to get



DA adds new charges against David, Louise Turpin

Updated 1 hr ago



Ex-NFL player questioned about Instagram post

Updated 48 mins ago



Woman stabbed during Santa Monica break-in; suspect sought

Updated 1 hr 34 mins ago



Student arrested for making threats at Yucca Valley High School

Updated 2 hrs 19 mins ago

Boy, 12, arrested after school threatened

Updated 27 mins ago

Actor Josh Hartnett stretches comedy muscles in 'Oh Lucy!'

Updated 9 mins ago

Woman found dead with throat cut in Sylmar park

Updated 2 hrs 14 mins ago

Sheriff: Pico Rivera apartment fire likely caused by plumbing work

1 dead, 1 critical in Orange stabbing near homeless encampment

White House locked down after vehicle strikes barrier

Updated 2 hrs 44 mins ago

Ex-Trump campaign aide pleads guilty in Russia probe

Twin brothers arrested for child porn

worse no matter how hard officers train to deal with it.

Report a Typo

Related Topics:

- society
- los angeles county sheriff's department
- mental health
- safety
- health care
- exclusive
- homeless
- jail
- Los Angeles County

- Share
- G+
- Tweet
- Email

(Copyright ©2018 KABC-TV. All Rights Reserved.)

SPONSORED CONTENT



Larchmont, This Meal Prep Kit Saves You the Most Money
Home Chef



Passion Meets Power: The Ladies of Team USA
Livingly



This Meal Delivery Kit Actually Costs Less Than Groceries
Home Chef



Born Before 1964? Claim These 19 'Seniors Rebates' Now
Prime8



One Man's Honest Review Of HelloFresh
Popdust



Purchase & Register a Domain Name For Your Website Today
Yahoo! Search

FROM AROUND THE WEB

Here's Why You Should Stop 'Googling' People (BeenVerified.com)

MORE FROM ABC7

Great-aunt of missing boy says she saw signs of abuse before he disappeared
Maryland police officer, who

a week apart in NorCal

VIDEO: Flight attendant helps mother of three calm down toddler

MORE NEWS

TOP VIDEO



DA adds new charges against David, Louise Turpin
Updated 1 hr ago



Woman stabbed during Santa Monica break-in; suspect sought
Updated 1 hr 34 mins ago



1 dead, 1 critical in Orange stabbing near homeless encampment



300 displaced after massive Pico Rivera fire

MORE VIDEO