

Fifth man arrested in Madras meth sweep

by Cheryl McDermott

A Madras man detectives believe to be involved in large-quantity sales and manufacturing of methamphetamine was arrested Tuesday after driving to a remote location outside of town “ostensibly to retrieve a hidden drug stash” and allegedly making what appeared to be several drug sales. It is the fifth such arrest in less than a week.

On Monday detectives from the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement (CODE) team received a tip regarding alleged drug trafficking activities of 41-year old Hugo Lopez-Gonzalez, Lt. Jim Porter said.

Over nine ounces of meth were seized in the latest of five recent arrests of large-scale drug dealers in the Madras area “CODE photo. (Inset) Hugo Lopez-Gonzalez, JCJ photo
CODE detectives set up surveillance Tuesday to monitor the movements of the suspect, and he was observed driving to a remote location about two miles west of Madras on Belmont Road where he parked his vehicle, walked out into the sagebrush, and picked up a disposable coffee cup from the ground. Lopez-Gonzales was “acting in a suspicious manner”, said the lieutenant, “continuously looking in all directions.”

According to Lt. Porter, the suspect’s actions were “nearly identical” to those of Jose Isabel Monje Figueroa and Angel Vasques Ramos, men arrested in May 2006 when CODE Detective watched them dig up a stash of meth they had buried south of Madras near Haystack Reservoir.

Lopez-Gonzalez headed back into Madras, and was “driving like an individual who was attempting to see if he were being followed,” said the lieutenant. The suspect was observed “making contacts with individuals in a manner consistent with someone who was selling drugs,” he added.

Lopez-Gonzalez was contacted and taken into custody, said Porter. He was allegedly found with three ounces of methamphetamine having an estimated resale value of \$8000, \$1900 in cash, and the disposable coffee cup in his possession when arrested.

The arrest of Lopez-Gonzalez brings the total to five men apprehended during the past week for alleged methamphetamine manufacturing and sales in the Madras area, the lieutenant said. CODE detectives, assisted by Jefferson County Sheriff's deputies and Madras Police officers, have recently focused on identifying and apprehending large-scale dealers in that area. The five arrests resulted in the seizure of \$9700 in cash, and over nine ounces of meth "about 500 doses" with an estimated street value of \$26,000.

The CODE team is a multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force comprised of detectives from all Central Oregon law enforcement agencies including the Bend Police Department, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, Redmond Police Department, Crook County Sheriff's Office, Prineville Police Department, Oregon State Police, United States Drug Enforcement Administration, Deschutes County District Attorney, and the Oregon National Guard.

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