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LEGISLATIVE **NEWSLETTER**

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Operation Rio Grande Update

In an unprecedented manner, state, local and federal leaders; law enforcement agencies; and public, private and non-profit organizations came together to address the lawlessness occurring in the Rio Grande district in Salt Lake City.

The 3-phase Operation Rio Grande plan is a result multi-jurisdictional collaboration to improve public safety and restore order in anticipation of the Road Home closing and new resource centers beginning operations in July of 2019. The purpose of this operation is to address the lawlessness in the Rio Grande area, bring criminal activity to a halt, get individuals treatment they might need, and connect them with employment and housing opportunities.

The 3-phases consist of:

- Phase 1 – Public Safety and Restoring Order: Focus is on law enforcement, identifying and arresting dangerous criminals who are preying on the most vulnerable.
- Phase 2 – Assessment and Treatment: Provide assessment and treatment for addiction and behavioral disorders to those in the Rio Grande District.
- Phase 3 – Dignity of Work: Public and private organizations are working together to increase employment opportunities and training to this population.

Operation Rio Grande started on August 14. The goal is to lock up dangerous criminals who have preyed on our most vulnerable citizens. Since then, 852 arrests have been made, of which 72 were felony arrest, 82 were felony arrest with warrants, 155 were misdemeanors and 543 were misdemeanor arrests with warrants.

The Rio Grande area has already seen improvements since the operation began. Law and order is being restored, resulting in greater safety and access to homeless services for individuals in need. Additionally, those in need are being directed to available services.



Operation Rio Grande Update Cont.

The state is committed to maintaining and enhancing the law enforcement presence in and around the Rio Grande area for the next two years. This process will restore the civil liberties and personal security of those who live and work around Pioneer Park and those experiencing homelessness. It will also connect those in need with social services available in the area.

The next vital step is to create a secure area for those experiencing homelessness to be protected from the criminal element. Developing a safe space is critical to the immediate and long-term goals of the operation to increase public safety and reduce criminal activity that plagues the area. It will also help service providers identify and understand each individual seeking services in the area, in order to tailor and enhance services for each individual. Examples of enhanced services include outreach and engagement, housing connection resources, directing individuals to employment opportunities outside of the area, and enabling individuals to exit homelessness on a pathway to self-sufficiency.

In anticipation of this safe space, a minimal section of Rio Grande Street, between two existing facilities, is recommended for closure. This closure will not prevent access to any business or organization in the area. In fact, those currently receiving services are required to cross the street daily – with beds on one side of the street and meals, employment and ID services on the other.

This safe space has always been a part of the Operation Rio Grande strategy in an effort to reduce homelessness and improve public safety in the area. Diverse stakeholders – the State of Utah, Salt Lake County, service providers in the area and the Pioneer Park Coalition – agree that closing the street is critical to achieving both the immediate, medium and long-term goals of the operation.



Operation Rio Grande Update Cont.

Shelters are not long-term solutions for the homeless. Plans are being implemented to increase housing, residential rehabilitation, healthcare and behavioral healthcare. This will reduce and prevent the length of homelessness, as well as keep individuals exiting homelessness on a path of self-sufficiency.

Components of the operation include law enforcement (28%), jail beds (22%) treatment beds (28%) and housing and services (22%). The initial estimated cost of Operation Rio Grande is \$67 million over two years. The three primary jurisdictions—State of Utah, Salt Lake County and Salt Lake City—are working to secure funding for the areas that make up the operation.

Nearly one-third of the total cost, \$20 million, will be absorbed within existing budgets. Partners have identified offsets and sources to cover more than another third, \$27 million. We are working with the private sector and other government entities to identify the funding and resources available for the remaining one-third needed, approximately \$21 million.

Citizens have expressed concerns about the scattering of the Rio Grande population into surrounding neighborhoods. Dispersal was anticipated and has always been part of the operational budget and law enforcement strategy. Law enforcement officials will pursue and arrest criminals as they move throughout the state.

If you are aware of illegal activity, please report it to your local police department. If it is an emergency, call 911.

Visit OperationRioGrande.utah.gov for additional information including FAQs, details of the operation, previous press conferences, articles and more. Updated information is continually added.

Recap

House News

Former Rep. Adam Gardiner resigned from the Utah House of Representatives on August 21, 2017. Gardiner was elected to serve the remainder of Gary Ott's term as Salt Lake County Recorder at the Special Election held by the Salt Lake County Republican Central Committee Meeting on Aug. 17.

On September 14, West Jordan delegates will meet to choose a new representative for House District 43 to fill Rep. Gardiner's seat in the House of Representatives.

Notification System

During the 2017 General Session, H.B. 53, Missing and Exploited Children's Day passed the Utah Legislature. Utah's first official *Rachael Runyan Missing and Exploited Children's Day* was held at the Rachael Runyan Memorial Park in Sunset on Saturday, August 26.

"Anything and everything we can do to call attention to this effort and save the lives of innocent children is critical and we in the Utah Department of Public Safety applaud this effort," said Gina McNeil, Utah Amber Alert Coordinator.

Rachael Runyan was abducted from a playground in Sunset, Utah and subsequently murdered in 1982.



The notification system to alert the public when a child has been abducted in Utah started with Elaine Runyan, mother of Rachael, as well as others who played a significant role in creating an alert system, referred to as the Rachael Alert.

In 2003, the U.S. Congress passed a national alert system—AMBER Alert. Not wanting to have any confusion when working to save an abducted child, the state changed the name of the notification system from the Rachael Alert to the AMBER Alert to coincide with national efforts.

Utah's AMBER Alert is tested twice yearly—January 13 and August 26—chosen specifically to call attention to the abduction date of Rachael.

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Interim Committees



Grillin' and chillin' at the Kearns
Night Out Against Crime

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To read previous
interim highlights,
follow [this](#) link.



I sponsored the fishing booth at
the Labro Day Picnic in Magna.
These cuties are twins that
enjoyed fishing!

To read this
month's interim
highlights, click on
the link [here](#).

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Veterans' and Military Affairs Commission