

Watsonville's gang activity on the rise

Gangs

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✓ WATSONVILLE — Gang activity has increased in the city, including two shootings over the weekend believed to be gang-related, police say.

Police are unsure what has prompted the apparent wave of retaliatory violence ranging from vandalism to attempted murder.

"Gang-related violence is usually related to a specific event, but we don't know what that is," Capt. Eddie Rodriguez said Monday.

Friday night, a 26-year-old man was flown to Stanford Medical Center for treatment of possible paralysis after he was shot and stabbed at a party in a home on Davis Avenue. Police are searching for four or five men seen fleeing the home in a 1998 white Camry with tinted windows.

Sunday about 8 p.m., several shots were fired into a home on West Lake Avenue. Children were in the home, but no one was hit. One bullet lodged in a television, Rodriguez said.

Watsonville Police Department has a gang unit staffed with five officers, Rodriguez said.

"They've been very active, making contacts out in the field and working closely with probation and parole (officers)," he said. "We've also had a number of guns seized over the past few weeks."

For example, Rodriguez said, police confiscated a handgun and a dagger last week after stopping a speeding car. They arrested the four occupants on drunken driving, weapon possession, evading and other charges.

Investigators also have been getting help from witnesses.

"There's always fear when dealing with these type of cases, but we do get community support and in the cases we are investigating right now, we have some pretty good statements from people who are, thankfully, willing to talk to us," Rodriguez said.

Call Watsonville police investigations at 728-6001 or the anonymous tip line at 728-3544.

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