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Ingrid Braun
Sheriff-Coroner

MONO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
PRESS RELEASE

Michael Moriarty
Undersheriff

To: All Media Partners

From: Jennifer M. Hansen, Public Information Officer

Date: August 18, 2015

RE: Falsified Media Credential leads to arrest

On Monday, August 17, 2015, at approximately 4:30pm, Mono County Sheriff's Office Deputies assigned to the Walker Fire Incident responded to the Incident Command Post (ICP) in Lee Vining regarding two suspicious males claiming to be media representatives wanting to cover the fire.

Aaron Browne, age 44, of Meadow Vista, California, and Payton Ware, age 33, of Elk Grove, California, presented media credentials that aroused the suspicions of the incident management staff at the Walker Fire ICP. Mr. Browne and Mr. Ware were dressed in new firefighter type gear, with a "Wildland Fire Fighter" hat on, with no designation of any identifying geographical area or crew name. Mr. Browne was driving a white pickup truck full of fire and camping gear, including "line lunches" from several other fires.

Due to the suspicious media credentials, it was believed that Mr. Browne and Mr. Ware were trying to gain access to the fire ground. People try to gain access to fire grounds for reasons such as to steal equipment and supplies or to attempt to contact California Department of Corrections inmate fire crews to smuggle contraband or weapons to the inmates. A check was conducted on both Mr. Browne and Mr. Ware to verify their credentials. Their credentials were in fact falsified and both men had no media affiliation. Mr. Browne was also verified as a convicted felon. Mr. Browne and Mr. Ware were detained on scene and their vehicle searched. A hard case belonging to Mr. Browne was found containing a canister of pepper spray. Mr. Ware was released at the scene.

Aaron Browne, age 44, of Meadow Vista, California, was arrested for a violation of Penal Code 22810(a) – Felon in possession of pepper spray. He was transported without incident to Bridgeport to the Mono County Jail.

All charges against Mr. Browne are pending with the Mono County District Attorney's Office.

Written and reported by: Jennifer M. Hansen, Public Information Officer