

Freetown Firefighters race to extinguish fire at solar panel field

“Just after 5:00 pm on Monday, Freetown Fire Department crews were alerted to a brush fire behind a solar field on Dr Braley Rd.

The fire originated inside the solar field enclosure and extended into the surrounding woods. Several acres burned before crews could fully contain the fire.

While we have had a great deal of rain this spring it only takes a short time for the surface fuels to dry out and burn easily.”-Freetown Fire Department.



Freetown Fire Department photo.



Freetown Fire Department photo.



Freetown Fire Department photo.



Freetown Fire Department photo.



Freetown Fire Department photo.

21-year old Massachusetts man allegedly caught with CSAM videos of children one to eight years old

Defendant allegedly possessed videos files of child sexual abuse material; some depicting children approximately one to eight years old.

“BOSTON – A Lowell man has been arrested for child pornography offenses.

Steven Armando Estrada Ramirez, 21, was charged with receipt and possession of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Estrada Ramirez made an initial appearance in federal court in Boston yesterday.

According to the charging documents, Estrada was identified as a participant in multiple groups on a mobile chat application, in which the primary purpose of the group, is for users share and view CSAM. It is alleged that multiple files located within those chat application groups depicted child pornography. During a search of his residence, Estrada was found to be in possession of a USB drive containing approximately 800 video files, many of which had filenames descriptive of child pornography, and the majority of which depicted child pornography. The files allegedly depicted children who appeared to be approximately one to eight years old.

The charge of receipt of child pornography provides for a mandatory minimum sentence of five years and up to 20 years in prison, at least five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of possession of child pornography provides for a sentence of up to 10 years

in prison, at least five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy and Michael J. Krol, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New England made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Lauren Maynard of the Major Crimes Unit is prosecuting the case.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse, launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/psc>.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law."-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

**Massachusetts Agriculture Day
awards \$3 million in grants**

to support farmers, South Coast included

“BOSTON – Governor Maura Healey declared April 3, 2024, as Massachusetts Agriculture Day. As part of the celebration, Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll announced over \$3 million in grants to support Massachusetts farmers through programs that improve composting efforts, food safety, cranberry bog restoration, stewardship, and business planning.

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) Commissioner Ashley Randle also announced the formation and inaugural members of the Massachusetts Agricultural Youth Council. Comprised of high school seniors, the Ag Youth Council will cultivate and foster the next generation of leaders in the agriculture industry in Massachusetts.

Organized by the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation and MDAR, Massachusetts Agriculture Day at the State House celebrates the agricultural industry and gathers farmers, producers, and commodity groups from across the Commonwealth to showcase the richness and diversity of Massachusetts grown products, allowing legislators and officials the opportunity to sample locally produced food and crops and learn more about important issues directly from farmers.



Mass.gov photo.

“This Ag Day we’re celebrating our farmers who work tirelessly throughout the year to grow and produce a diverse, healthy food supply to feed residents across Massachusetts. Last year, I witnessed the resilience of our farmers as they worked to recover from a series of devastating severe weather events,” said Governor Maura Healey. “Our administration stands in support of the agricultural industry and will continue provide farms with resources to increase production and help reduce food insecurity.”

“Strong, flourishing farms contribute so much more than the food that they produce. They catalyze economic benefits that go beyond the agricultural sector,” said Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll. “Providing direct funding to our farmers through these programs ensures our vibrant industry continues to produce the highest quality food. These grants demonstrate our commitment to the agricultural industry and goes a long way to ensuring this sector thrives.”

“These programs showcase our commitment to supporting our farmers at all stages in their businesses,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper. “Whether just starting out, taking the reins from a previous owner, or

working to secure their continued longevity, our MDAR grant opportunities can enhance sustainability for farms.”

Agriculture Youth Council

MDAR selected 12 high school students to serve on the council. The group will meet monthly to discuss agricultural issues, hear from guest speakers from the agricultural industry, learn about the legislative process and workforce development opportunities attend special events and tours, and enhance their professional skills.

The inaugural members of the Agricultural Youth Council are:

- Noorhan Al-Dulaimi – Shrewsbury (Shrewsbury High School)
- Tammy Anderson – Boston (Norfolk County Agricultural High School)
- Susan Barrows – Upton (Nipmuc Regional High School)
- Amanda Cooper – Ipswich (Malden Catholic High School)
- Michaela Jardine-Yeats – Lunenburg (Lunenburg Middle & High School)
- Shayn Jones – New Bedford (Bristol County Agricultural High School)
- Colleen Kielbania – Ipswich (Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical High School)
- Miru Kunst – West Boylston (Norfolk County Agricultural High School)
- Haley-Ann Lynch – Southwick (Smith Vocational & Agricultural High School)
- Brooke Macjewski – Grafton (Norfolk County Agricultural High School)
- Ana Carolina Maloon – Salem (Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical High School)
- Carolinne Rodriguez – Beverly (Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical High School)

“Being a fifth-generation dairy farmer, I was fortunate to have mentors to teach, guide, and empower me. The creation of the Ag Youth Council will go further – in bringing together

future Massachusetts agricultural leaders to nurture their skills so that the next generation will have the tools to succeed in this everchanging field,” said MDAR Commissioner Randle. “Our administration is committed to supporting beginning farmers and providing them with resources they’ll need to start and grow an agricultural business. Youth engagement and workforce development is necessary to the future of our state’s agriculture industry, and I look forward to working with this first class of students.”

Grant Funding

MDAR is awarding over \$3 million in funding to 74 farms through the Agricultural Composting Improvement Program (ACIP), the Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP), Cranberry Bog Renovation Grant (CBRG) Program, Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture (MEGA) Program, and Stewardship Assistance and Restoration on APRs (SARA) Program. These programs will help to improve and strengthen their operations in the short and long term.

“On the Cape and Islands, our farmers and aquaculturists bolster our local economy and allow residents to access fresh and healthy food,” said Senator Julian Cyr (D – Cape and Islands). “I am thrilled that ten farms on Cape Cod and Martha’s Vineyard will receive funding through the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. These monies will ensure food safety, help renovate cranberry bogs, and support the vitality and vibrancy of our coastal agriculture industry.”

The Agricultural Composting Improvement Program (ACIP) funds equipment and projects to improve agricultural composting practices and facilitate the use of compost as a valuable soil amendment on farms. MDAR provides technical assistance to farms conducting agricultural composting and encourages farms to utilize compost as a soil amendment or manure management tool.

The Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP) allows produce and aquaculture operations to address food safety on their farms. It enables the operations to meet buyer demands, increase local food consumption, and protect public health by reducing food safety risks.

The following are the Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program grant recipients (Round 1) on the South Coast for 2024:

- Elliot Farm, LLC, Rochester: Harvest & Storage Bins, \$11,262.00
- Blue Stream Shellfish, LLC, Fairhaven: Ice Machine; Refrigeration; Shed, \$23,620.00
- Round Island Shellfish, Fairhaven: Insulated Vats, \$2,744.00
- Orr's Farmstand, Westport: Washing, Packing, Storage Building w/Walk-In, \$50,000.00
- Copper Beech Farm, Inc., Mattapoissett: Ice Machine; Insulated Vat, \$7,417.00

The following are the Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program grant recipients (Round 2) from the South Coast for 2024:

- The Neighborhood Farm, LLC – Westport: Well for Greenhouses, \$14,000.00

The Cranberry Bog Renovation Grant Program provides reimbursement to cranberry operations that implement projects that improve both bog design and production while preventing, reducing, or eliminating negative environmental impacts that may occur from cranberry production. By funding these projects, the program enhances the cranberry industry's overall financial and environmental sustainability.

The following are the Cranberry Bog Renovation Grant Program

recipients from the South Coast for FY24:

- Eagle Holt Cranberry Co., Inc., Wareham: Bog Renovation on 11 Acres, \$125,000.00
- Beaton's, Inc., Rochester: Bog Renovation on 2.29 Acres, \$57,250.00
- Rocky Maple Bogs, Wareham: Bog Renovation on 5 Acres, \$125,000.00
- H.M. Riggle, Rochester: Bog Renovation on 3 Acres, \$75,000.00
- Sleepy Hollow Cranberries, Rochester: Bog Renovation on 7 Acres, \$99,857.00
- Wilson Cranberry, LLC, Rochester: Bog Renovation on 6 Acres, \$63,920.00

The Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture Program assists beginning farmers who have been in business for between 1 and 10 years by providing technical assistance (including a mentorship option) and business planning assistance. Grant funds of up to \$30,000 may be available on a 1:1 matching cost reimbursement basis to assist farmers whose goal is to raise agricultural products and who are developing their farms into commercially viable operations. Funds are typically used for equipment, infrastructure, or other capital improvements to implement strategies identified during the planning process that will help their business grow.

The following are the Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture recipients from the South Coast for 2024:

- Sibling Organic Crops, Lakeville: Tractor, \$10,000.00

The Stewardship Assistance and Restoration on APRs Program helps restore active commercial farming on land that has protected through the Department's Agricultural Preservation

Restriction (APR) program. Funds may be used for materials, contracted labor, or equipment rental costs to clear or reclaim inactive fields that are out of production at no fault of the current owner. Grant funds of up to \$35,000 are available on a cost reimbursement basis with a 15% match of total project costs required by the awardee.

The following are the Stewardship Assistance on APRs grant recipients from the South Coast for 2024:

- Slocum King Farm Inc., South Dartmouth: Clearing of field edges of invasive plants, repairing of rock walls used with electric fencing as part of grazing system for small herd of beef cattle, \$20,102.50
- The Lewis Family Farm, Westport: Clearing of field edges and overgrown hedgerows to return underutilized land to fully productive pasture for beef herd, \$35,000.00

Bristol County Sheriff's Office appoints 23-year veteran as new Superintendent

"Please join me in congratulating Joe Oliver for being promoted to Superintendent. Eight people submitted resumes. Five were external candidates. Three people were interviewed yesterday, one was external from another correctional organization.

A three person interview panel interviewed the three candidates. The panel was General Counsel Gretchen Bennet, Chief of Staff and Special Sheriff Owen Bebeau, and former DOC

Commissioner Luis Spencer. They recommended Joe Oliver.

Joe has 23 years of experience with the BCSO. He started as a Correctional Officer in 2000. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 2003, Captain in 2010, Major in 2012, and Colonel in 2019.

In addition to being a Correctional Officer, Joe was on the Special Response Team (SRT) eventually becoming the SRT Commander, was the Director of the BCSO Training Academy, was an Assistant Deputy Superintendent of Ash Street, an Assistant Superintendent (Colonel), and most recently Acting Superintendent.

Congratulations, Joe!"-Paul Heroux.

Massachusetts State Police seize psilocybin mushrooms, THC, pills, cocaine, marijuana after traffic stop

"Last month, in the area of Preble Circle in Boston, one of our members initiated a traffic stop due to multiple motor vehicle infractions. As our Trooper approached the vehicle, the operator made several suspicious movements, and when questioned provided our member with incomprehensible and strange answers to standard questions. Immediately, the Trooper requested backup to their location and removed the driver from the vehicle due to safety concerns.

Throughout the investigation, our Troopers located a large sum of cash, suspected psilocybin mushrooms, two boxes of THC

products, a variety of pills suspected to be class B and class C narcotics, clear vials containing white powder substance suspected to be cocaine, three mason jars containing suspected marijuana, a scale with brown and white residue, and a large amount of distribution-related paraphernalia including empty vials and baggies.

The suspect is now facing charges of trafficking cocaine, possession with intent to distribute class B, possession with intent to distribute class C, possession with intent to distribute class D, and failure to stop at a stop sign. The Association would like to commend the hard work of our members from the H-6 SP South Boston Barracks!"-State Police Association of Massachusetts.



State Police Association of Massachusetts photo.



State Police Association of Massachusetts photo.



State Police Association of Massachusetts photo.



State Police Association of Massachusetts photo.

New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of March 4, 2024 – March 8, 2024,

“The City of New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of March 4, 2024 – March 8, 2024, and they are as follows:

Eversource will be working on gas main relays and services on:

- Main relay on Acushnet Ave from Phillips Rd to Fox St
- Main relay on Central Ave from Acushnet Ave to Ashley Blvd
- Main relay on Central Ave from Church St to Brook St
- Main relay on County St from Cove St to Rivet St
- Main relay on Hicks St from Acushnet Ave to N Front St
- Main relay on Jouvette St from County St to Crapo St
- Main relay on W Rodney French Blvd from Calumet St to Bayview St

Other:

- MassDOT will be staging installation and beam end cleaning and concrete encasements at I-195 East and West bound lanes over Purchase St, County St and State St work is scheduled during the overnight hours starting and is scheduled until May 31st of 2024. Work will take place Sundays to Thursdays. Police will be on site for detour and safety setups.
- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will continue site work at the future South Coast Rail station platform locations in the city. (Church St at Carlisle St and Wamsutta St at Acushnet Ave.) If you have questions, please email the project team at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us
- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will continue site work at the future pedestrian bridge across Route 18 impacting parking along Purchase Street between Willis Street and Pearl Street and at the Division of Career Services on Acushnet Avenue. Temporary detours may be in place pending construction activities occurring. If you have questions, please email the project team at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us
- New Bedford: Rt. 18 Overnight Closures and Detours for Pedestrian Bridge Work. Construction continues for the new pedestrian bridge across Route 18 and Acushnet Avenue connecting to the New Bedford Station. Crews are currently ahead of schedule with the erecting of temporary support steel structures (falsework) over Route 18 and will begin construction of the temporary bridge deck next week. The falsework and deck will be used to support the placement and construction of the new permanent bridge steel. To accommodate the construction of the west side plaza of the bridge, there will be no street parking on the east side of Purchase Street between Pearl Street and Willis Street.

Project: Lead Service Line Replacement Program Phase II

General Contractor: C. Naughton Corp. (Monday-Friday 7:00am -5:00pm)

- The contractor will be working Lead Service Line

Replacements. Monday the contractor will be on Plymouth Street, between Brigham Street and Brownell Street. Tuesday on Brigham Street, between Farm Street and Ryan Street. Wednesday on Priscilla Street, between Brigham Street and West Street., Elizabeth Street, between Brigham Street and West Street., Priscilla Street, between Gould Street and West Street. Thursday on Priscilla Street, between Gould Street and Brigham Street and Gould Street, between Hawthorn Street and Priscilla Street. Friday between Devoll Street, between Allen Street and Grape Street, Rural Street, between Allen Street and Grape Street. During working hours, these roads may be closed with signs posted to detour traffic around work areas. Police details will be on-site allowing access to residents only and assist with traffic management.

Project: Grape Street Collector Rehabilitation General Contractor: Green Mountain Pipeline Services Subcontractor: Ribeiro Construction Inc (Friday 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM)

- The Subcontractor is scheduled to replace a manhole at the SW side Buttonwood Park Pond and a manhole frame at Brownell Ave and Gaywood St. There may be a brief lane reduction along Brownell Ave while work is being completed.

Project: Phase 4 Transmission Main Reinforcement Project Contractor: C. Naughton Corp. (Monday-Friday 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM)

- The Contractor will continue replacing a section of the existing 48-in water transmission main north of the railroad crossing at Chipaway Road in East Freetown.

Project: Shawmut Avenue and Howland Street Pumping Station Improvements Project General Contractor: WES Construction Corp. (Monday-Friday 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM)

- The Contractor will continue installing the new sewer force main along Nash Road and Shawmut Avenue and Mt Pleasant Street. Lane restrictions will be in place during working hours, with one lane of alternating traffic open. Police officers will be on-site to assist with traffic management.”

Five people are hospitalized following a head-on crash in Foxboro involving an ambulance.

At 7:00pm Thursday night a Brewster Ambulance collided head-on with a Honda Pilot carrying five people, including a child. Both vehicles were traveling on Main Street in Foxboro.

The Brewster Ambulance was transporting a 70-year-old patient of the collision. The patient, two Emergency Medical Technicians, and a 40-year-old mother in the Honda Pilot were injured. However, the most severely injured person in the accident was an elementary school age girl who was in the back seat of the Pilot. Her injuries were serious enough to require helicopter transport to Massachusetts General Hospital.

The accident is currently being investigated by the Massachusetts State Police and Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey's Office. No charges have been filed yet. The medical conditions of all the injured has not been released.



New Bedford Police Department respond to overnight shooting

At approximately 11:40pm on Friday night, the New Bedford Police Department received multiple 911 calls for shots being fired on Merrimac Street.

Upon arrival, police discovered the street littered with multiple shell casings and a vehicle that sustained damage from the gunfire. A perimeter was immediately established and units began to canvas the surrounding area for suspects.

This is a developing story we will update as we get more details.

ICE, ERO Boston catches, charges Haitian national with rape of disabled person

“BOSTON – Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Boston apprehended an unlawfully present Haitian national Jan. 9 who was recently arrested by local police on charges of rape and indecent assault and battery on a developmentally disabled person in Dorchester. ERO Boston lodged an immigration detainer against the Haitian citizen, but the Dorchester District Court chose not to honor it and released him from jail after his arrest on the sexual assault-related charges.

“Disturbingly and despite our filing an immigration detainer, this individual was released back into the community by the

criminal court,” said ERO Boston Field Office Director Todd M. Lyons. “The men and women of ERO Boston continue to protect the community from those who pose a real public safety threat to our communities. We remain strongly committed to protecting residents in communities by apprehending those who are not lawfully present in this country and pose a threat to public safety. This remains central piece of our mission.”

In December 2022, the 31-year-old Haitian national arrived at the port of entry in Brownsville, Texas, where he was deemed inadmissible and issued a notice to appear before an immigration judge with the Department of Justice (DOJ) Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) in Boston.

In September 2023, Boston police arrested him for rape and indecent assault and battery on a developmentally disabled person. Following his arrest, ERO Boston lodged an immigration detainer with the Dorchester District Court seeking his custody. The court did not honor the immigration detainer, and the noncitizen was ultimately released from the jail in Boston, where he had been held since his arrest, with an electronic monitoring device Nov. 8, 2023, pending the resolution of his criminal charges in a local criminal court.

After becoming aware of his recent arrest and unlawful immigration status, ERO Boston began an investigation to confirm the Haitian citizen’s presence its area of responsibility. Following confirmation of his presence, officers with ERO Boston arrested him without incident in Dorchester Jan. 9.

His charges remain pending with the local criminal court. He will remain in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody pending an upcoming hearing before a DOJ immigration judge. Following adjudication of his local criminal charges, ERO Boston will seek his removal from the United States

ERO conducts removals of individuals without a lawful basis to

remain in the United States, including at the order of immigration judges with the DOJ's EOIR. EOIR is a separate entity from the Department of Homeland Security and ICE.

In fiscal year 2023, ERO made 170,590 administrative arrests, a 19.5% increase over the previous year. ERO arrested 73,822 noncitizens with a criminal history; those arrested had an average of 4 charges and convictions per individual, including more than 33,209 charges or convictions for assault, 7,520 for weapons offenses, 1,713 for homicide-related offenses, and 1,615 for kidnapping. Removals also included 3,406 known or suspected gang members, 139 known or suspected terrorists, seven human rights violators, and 108 foreign fugitives wanted by their governments for crimes including homicide, rape, terrorism and kidnapping. Also in fiscal year 2023, ERO conducted 142,580 removals to more than 170 countries worldwide.

As one of ICE's three operational directorates, ERO is the principal federal law enforcement authority in charge of domestic immigration enforcement. ERO's mission is to protect the homeland through the arrest and removal of those who undermine the safety of U.S. communities and the integrity of U.S. immigration laws, and its primary areas of focus are interior enforcement operations, management of the agency's detained and non-detained populations and the repatriation of noncitizens who have received final orders of removal. ERO's workforce consists of more than 7,700 law enforcement and non-law enforcement support personnel across 25 domestic field offices and 208 locations nationwide, 30 overseas postings and multiple temporary duty travel assignments along the border.

Members of the public can report crime and suspicious activity by calling 866-347-2423 or completing the online tip form."- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

New England State Police assisted by New England Patriots to help mothers in need

Throughout 2023, and especially in these final months, the women involved with the NESPAC Women's Conference have been working hard to get mothers what they need. NESPAC is the acronym for New England State Police Administrators Compact, a mutual aid and assistance partnership among the State Police agencies of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Vermont.

First, with the support of the New England Patriots, they organized Operation Shower at Gillette Stadium to assist military moms-to-be whose spouses are deployed.

Their goals were to celebrate motherhood and build a support network for expectant mothers. Troopers from the six NESPAC states donated boxes of diapers to distribute – they purchased so many, in fact, that there were a lot of boxes left over after Operation Shower, so Massachusetts State Police Major James Bazzinotti and Captain Kathryn Downey arranged to donate them to My Brother's Table, a Lynn-based soup kitchen and social service non-profit.

Troopers came from around the state to assist in this secondary mission. The Patriots Foundation, the team's charitable arm, was happy to be involved again and brought along former Patriots lineman Max Lane to speak on the importance of volunteerism.

Dianne Kuzis Hills, the Executive Director of My Brother's Table, expressed gratitude for the donated diapers, which she said will be of great assistance to families in need. Both she and Major Bazzinotti, the commander of MSP's Troop A, spoke of the value of community, of supporting others and, in turn, turning to them for support when you need it.

"This is what My Brother's Table is all about" Ms. Hills said. "Maybe one day you're the helper and the next day you're the one being helped."

The Massachusetts State Police would like to thank everyone involved in the success of both these missions from the bottom of our hearts."-Massachusetts State Police.