

KERN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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ISSUE: 25-53

TRAINING BULLETIN

DATE: September 10, 2025

California Assembly Bill 2655 & Penal Code 647.9

Overview & Legal Purpose

Assembly Bill 2655 was passed on September 28, 2020, and established Penal Code 647.9 which was effective January 1, 2021. PC 647.9 was established to prevent images of deceased people from being inappropriately circulated by first responders.

Summarization of Penal Code 647.9

First responders may not capture images of a deceased person unless done for an official law enforcement purpose or genuine public interest. Any violation of Penal Code 647.9(a) is punishable as a misdemeanor.

Complete Penal Code 647.9

- (a) A first responder, operating under color of authority, who responds to the scene of an accident or crime and captures the photographic image of a deceased person by any means, including, but not limited to, by use of a personal electronic device or a device belonging to their employing agency, for any purpose other than an official law enforcement purpose or a genuine public interest is guilty of a **misdemeanor** punishable by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per violation.
- (b) An agency that employs first responders shall, on January 1, 2021, notify its employees who are first responders of the prohibition imposed by this section.
- (c) For purposes of this section, "first responder" means a state or local peace officer, paramedic, emergency medical technician, rescue service personnel, emergency manager, firefighter, coroner, or employee of a coroner.

General Expectation of Sheriff's Office Personnel

Although Penal Code 647.9 directly references "first responders," it is the Kern County Sheriff's Office's stance that it is unacceptable for any member of the Sheriff's Office to take photographs of deceased persons for any purpose other than those explicitly permitted under Penal Code 647.9. This includes any personal, non-official, or curiosity-driven reasons. Such actions are a violation of department policy and public trust. Personnel must understand that the dignity of the deceased and the privacy of their families must be respected at all times. Any unauthorized photography may result in disciplinary action and potential criminal charges.

All personnel are required to review and acknowledge this training bulletin no later than **Friday, October 10, 2025.**