



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Clinton PD, Laurens Co. Sheriff Join McMaster's Internet Predator Task Force

Ten Law Enforcement Agencies Now Members In Statewide Online Sting Effort

Columbia, S.C. - Attorney General Henry McMaster has announced the addition of two (2) local law enforcement agencies to a state task force dedicated to catching sexual predators online before they can abduct or assault a child. Ten law enforcement agencies are now participating in the statewide task force designed to locate and arrest online predators.

At a news conference held at the Laurens County Sheriff's Office, McMaster announced that both the Laurens County Sheriff's Office and the City of Clinton Department of Public Safety are now partners in the Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force.

Laurens County Sheriff Ricky Chastain, Captain Joel Whitsel of the City of Clinton Department of Public Safety, and Eighth Circuit Solicitor Jerry Peace spoke in support of the expanding effort to protect the state's children from sexual predators on the Internet.

Laurens County and the City of Clinton join the Charleston City Police Department, the Westminster Police Department, the York County Sheriff's Department, the Spartanburg County Sheriff's Department, the City of Aiken Department of Public Safety, the Aiken County Sheriff's Department, the Florence County Sheriff's Department, and the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) on the statewide task force.

"Using the new Internet predator law, our undercover stings have been very successful in targeting these monsters before they can target our children," said McMaster. "The addition of these two law enforcement agencies adds more troops to the fight and will hopefully act as a strong deterrent to would be predators."

The South Carolina Task Force is part of a federal Department of Justice ICAC network dedicated to assisting state and local law enforcement agencies' efforts to combat child cyber enticement and child exploitation. Locally, it is operated by the Attorney General's Office in partnership with the State Law Enforcement Division and the South Carolina Computer Crimes Center.

Using the Internet predator law he pushed through the General Assembly in 2004, McMaster and the ICAC Task Force have aggressively investigated and prosecuted child cyber enticement cases. The law makes it a crime to stalk, lure or entice a child for abduction or sexual assault.

McMaster is now expanding the ICAC task force partnership to include local law enforcement agencies, with the Attorney General's Office providing assistance with federal ICAC funding, training and resources. In return, local law enforcement agencies will conduct proactive undercover Internet predator sting operations. As part of the agreement, the Attorney General's Office will prosecute the Internet predator cases with the local Solicitor prosecuting other child exploitation crimes.

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