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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 25, 2008**

## **Barker Ranch Update**

A decision on whether or not to excavate sites at Barker Ranch in a search for dead bodies has been delayed until May 9 after a crucial piece of soil testing equipment was damaged during the rough trip to the remote site. Inyo County Sheriff Bill Lutze had hoped to have the results of various tests available this week to shed further light on reports that there may be bodies buried on Barker Ranch, and aid in determining whether excavation is necessary. Reports suggested there may be bodies at Barker Ranch not uncovered during the era when Charles Manson and his followers lived there.

A team of forensic experts and Inyo County Sheriff's investigators recently conducted a search on the property with underground detection instruments. Investigators and scientists used portable ground penetrating radar, magnetometers, lasers and ALS, which are handheld light sources that emit powerful blue light similar to a laser. Scientists also brought a portable gas chromatograph mass spectrometer (GCMS) to test soil samples at the site, but it malfunctioned after the rough trip to the ranch, causing a delay in soil sample testing. The samples have been transported to laboratories where analysis can take place, with results expected back about May 9.

"It's unfortunate that such a sensitive, valuable piece of equipment had to be subjected to the wear-and-tear of the trip to Barker Ranch," said Sheriff Bill Lutze. "But we are talking about the very best in forensic technology and the information it would have provided is crucial to our ability to assess what we have at this site."

Laser and forensics experts from the Utah State Attorney General's Office of Investigations Division, the Uintah County, Utah, Sheriff's Department, and from private lab Evident, Inc., of Virginia, traveled to Death Valley to conduct forensic research. All equipment and technical assistance was donated.

*Office of the*  
**SHERIFF**  
**INYO COUNTY, CA**



**WILLIAM R. LUTZE**  
*Sheriff*

**JOHN N. EROPKIN**  
*Undersheriff*

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Sheriff Lutze provided further fascinating details about the kind of equipment and tests being done at Barker Ranch and on soil samples from the site. "This is the stuff of television's CSI series," the Sheriff said. "A laser, of ALS, causes bones to literally glow at a great distance, which is helpful to search teams covering a large outdoor area. Lasers have been proven effective in illuminating bones up to 300 years old and have been successful in several cold cases in Utah, which as terrain similar to the property in Death Valley.

"Some of this equipment is so cutting edge that it does not exist in the market place. This case will dramatically alter how police agencies search outdoor crime scenes in the future."

The Inyo County Sheriff's Office will issue further information in a news release once the results have arrived and been evaluated. Any release will also be posted on the website at [www.countyofinyo.org](http://www.countyofinyo.org)

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