



DTSC's OCI Hires Investigator in Southern California

Steve Hardy joined the Department of Toxic Substances Control's Office of Criminal Investigations in March and said the job is an "awesome fit."

Hardy, who works out of the Cypress office, is DTSC's third investigator in Southern California.

"The environmental aspect is the most exciting part because I know I will make a positive impact," said Hardy about his new position. "The challenges I face will be learning all the new environmental laws and getting to know all my new co-workers as there are so many employees at DTSC statewide."

DTSC's OCI now has nine investigators, nine scientists and three administrative staff members. OCI's mission is to prevent and investigate violations of California's Hazardous Waste Control Laws for the safety of the public and protection of the environment. DTSC Supervising Criminal Investigator II Enrique Baeza said bringing Hardy on staff is significant in regards to the mission.

"Adding a new investigator in Southern California helps us with our mission as it allows us to investigate more of the complaints that we receive," Baeza said.

The OCI investigators are the only peace officers employed within California's Environmental Protection Agency. They are also the only sworn law enforcement officers in state service who are specially trained to investigate the most serious environmental criminal offenses posing substantial danger to the California public and environment.

Hardy was a peace officer in the California Department of Insurance's fraud division for 10 years, focusing on felony white-collar crime investigations and organized crime. Most recently, he was a field training officer and a terrorism liaison officer. He served as a team leader on multiple undercover operations, arrest and search warrant operations, and other activities.

Before working with the Department of Insurance, Hardy served as a city planner in the Southern California cities of Pico Rivera and Brea for 15 years. In both positions, he specialized in environmental reviews, new industrial developments, trucking and warehouse operations, and he conducted field inspections.

Hardy's experience also includes time with the Fullerton Police Department. He received his Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) while with this department.

Hardy has a Master's of Public Administration from California State University, Long Beach, graduated from a regional fire academy, and also served three years as a reserve fire inspector for the Anaheim Fire Department.

"Based on all my training and experience in urban and regional planning, this is a position that is compatible," said Hardy about his new job with DTSC. "It's an awesome fit."

An additional Supervising Criminal Investigator is expected to be brought on board in Southern California on July 2, and OCI is working to fill five additional vacant investigator positions and two scientist positions.