

Amid increasing mountain lion sightings, California county turns to Facebook to share info

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Authorities—concerned about an increasing number of mountain lion encounters including one earlier this year that killed a man and severely

injured his brother—are asking residents of one California county to turn to Facebook to spread the word.

Over the weekend, the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office took to its social media channels to encourage residents to go online as part of its protocol for [mountain lion](#) safety. They touted a group named El Dorado County Mountain Lion Sightings, which had 7,000 members as of Monday, to report [mountain](#) lion activity across the county.

The announcement encourages anyone who sees a mountain lion to post details on the Facebook feed, which is listed after calling 911 if a mountain lion poses an immediate threat and calling the local agricultural department if pets or livestock get hurt or killed by a cougar, an animal common to the Sierra foothills that has increasingly been seen in populated areas.

The postings on the page include surveillance footage, photos of droppings and other safety announcements.

The page was created in early May, weeks after two brothers were attacked by a mountain lion resulting in the death of 21-year-old Taylen Brooks. His brother, Wyatt, required multiple surgeries but survived the attack. It happened March 23 off Darling Ridge Road east of Auburn on the outskirts of the Eldorado National Forest.

The attack shocked the foothill community and was the first deadly mountain lion encounter in California in 20 years.

Experts said after the attack that the brothers did the right things when they were pinned down by the cougar, which included making themselves appear bigger, shouting at it and throwing a backpack to try to scare it away. But instead of leaving, the 90-pound mountain lion became aggressive and attacked the brothers. County trappers, who

located the cat next to Brooks' body and scared it away, eventually re-located the mountain lion and killed it.

Attacks are rare, according to Josh Rosenau the director of policy and advocacy for the Mountain Lion Foundation.

"So much about this situation is unusual and surprising," Rosenau said of the attack at the time. "For the most part, mountain lions try to avoid people. They don't like human voices. They recognize human shapes. They tend to avoid people and things that are not obviously food."

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife reported just 21 mountain lion attacks on humans in the state since 1986, including none since the attack on the Brooks brothers in March. It marked the fourth attack that resulted in a death since records have been kept and the second in El Dorado County. The state's previous deadly encounter came in Orange County in January 2004.

El Dorado deputies said the agency receives calls to 911 for a "significant volume of mountain lion sightings each day" in the county. In developing the new protocol, the Sheriff's Office worked with the Outdoor View, a website dedicated to "educating and empowering your voice for the great outdoors," as well as county agricultural officials.

"It was determined that, at this time, simple 'sightings' should be posted on the El Dorado County Mountain Lion Sightings Facebook page," the Sheriff's Office said.

The page provides a phone number to report livestock kills and other non-emergency assistance but deputies said that in a situation to protect "yourself, your family, pets and livestock if you are at immediate risk or under attack," 911 remains the first option for help.

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