

Coke bust lands 2 South Tahoe residents in jail

By Kathryn Reed

A South Lake Tahoe man twice deported to Mexico faces a third deportation after being arrested on felony narcotics charges.

Florentino Vargas Barragan, 43, was arrested on charges of possession and sales of cocaine, transportation of narcotics and conspiracy.

Jeff Catchings, who heads the South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team, said, "It's very significant because of the amount (of cocaine) and amount of activity. He was very popular around the area of the Y. He would go to some of the restaurants and bars and hangout. We have received complaints from restaurants. For the most part they would kick him out."

Barragan, according to Catchings, was arrested Aug. 30 after selling cocaine to an undercover agent. He was arrested in the parking lot of Rite-Aid. Also arrested that Tuesday was Juan Pablo Garcia Mora, 27, of South Lake Tahoe. He faces charges of transportation of a narcotic and conspiracy.

The street value of the nearly 1 pound of uncut cocaine that was seized is \$17,000.

Barragan faces a minimum of seven years in jail if convicted and could serve additional federal time for illegal entry. The two times he was deported to Mexico was because of drug charges originating in South Lake Tahoe, according to Catchings.

Also taken by officers from the suspect's apartment after a search warrant was issued were three cell phones. The warrant allows officers to answer the phone. Catchings said they were

ringing nonstop until people figured out it wasn't Barragan on the other end.

Barragan's clientele was an extensive network of locals, according to Catchings. Officials, though, are focusing their efforts on dealers at this time and not users.