

Agents tracking down illegal guns in Calif.

By Richard Gonzales, NPR

In California, officials are ramping up a unique program that identifies and seizes guns from people who are prohibited from keeping them. Under state law, a legally registered gun owner loses the right to own a firearm when he or she is convicted of a crime or becomes mentally ill.

Last year, state agents seized nearly 2,000 firearms, but implementing the gun seizure program is a painstaking job. In a recent operation, a caravan of four unmarked trucks traversed the bedroom communities of San Francisco's East Bay. The trucks carry nine state agents wearing bulletproof vests and armed with .40-caliber Glock pistols and Tasers. They'll spend the next six hours looking for illegal guns, explains Special Agent Kisu Yo of the California Department of Justice.

Yo's team will visit the homes of 11 people who are considered Armed and Prohibited Persons, people on the so-called APPs list. They are all people who at one time purchased firearms legally, but have since run afoul of the law, Yo says. "Such as maybe a felony conviction, mental health commitment, they received a restraining order, domestic violence restraining order – some type of a misdemeanor conviction that prohibits them from possessing firearms."

Beginning In 2007, California officials began collecting names from court records, medical facilities and lists of known or wanted criminals, then cross-referenced them against the federal instant criminal background check system for gun-buyers. The list is updated every day.

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