

# Protecting the streets of Alamogordo

By Bryan Betts

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Scharmack conducted a field test on the marijuana seized from the two juveniles back at the station. He then placed the marijuana, pipe and Grateful Dead container in bags and logged the contents into evidence. (Bryan Betts—Daily News)

Alamogordo Police Department officer Rodney Scharmack started his Friday night patrol with a traffic stop at about 7:54 p.m., on a silver Ford van which drove straight in a 10th Street turn lane.

The driver passed a field sobriety test after pulling into the Walgreens parking lot, though Scharmack ticketed him for lacking a license and proof of insurance.

The stop was but the first of several on what would prove to be an eventful 12-hour shift, one in which Scharmack and other officers seized marijuana from juveniles, investigated an alleged rape and came close to using a Taser on an aggressive suicidal man.

"It's been steady, a good steady night," Scharmack said as he neared the end of his shift.

Friday night's shift began with a briefing at 6:50 p.m. in which officers reviewed the department's activity for the past two or three days.

Scharmack said officers often check their email or undergo brief refresher training at the beginning of their shift as well.

At 7:45 p.m., several of the six officers on duty filled up their patrol cars, Ford Crown Victorias, at the Shell gas station on North White Sands Boulevard. The officers work on what's known as a Panama schedule — three days on and two off, then two days on and three off — and rotate between the day and night shifts each month.

After the traffic stop on the silver Ford van, Scharmack drove north up to the Sonic on White Sands Boulevard. His patrol area covers the area from 10th Street north to the city limits, though he also patrolled and backed up other officers on the south side of town.

The southern patrol area, he said, tends to be busier because of the restaurants and bars on South White Sands Boulevard.

Scharmack stopped a truck near the Alamo Grill for a noise violation at 8:30 p.m. He wrote the driver a ticket for driving with a suspended license and without insurance while standing on the passenger side of his patrol car, his Maglite tucked under his left arm to illuminate his citation book.

Throughout the night, officers sought to locate a man who had a warrant for alleged battery against a household member. Scharmack and the other officers were unable to locate the man at two different residences, one on Linda Vista Drive and the other on Canal Street.

Scharmack, who's been a law enforcement officer in Alamogordo for eight years, said he's interacted with the man before.

"I've been doing this long enough that I know the people who like to get in trouble," he said.

One of the night's trickier calls occurred at 9:37 p.m. when officers responded to a report of a suicidal man at a residence on South Canyon Road.

The man stood outside the residence, continually shifting his weight from one foot to the other, for about 30 minutes while several officers attempted to calm him down.

Scharmack said the man made comments like he wanted to fight, leading one officer to pull out his Taser and aim the red laser sight at the man's body.

An ambulance arrived at 10:10 p.m. though, and the man went with the paramedics without incident.

About 20 minutes later, Scharmack seized a few grams of marijuana and a marijuana pipe from two juveniles after conducting a traffic stop near the Otero County Fairgrounds. Back at the station, he logged the seized marijuana into evidence and called the parents to let them know what happened.

"Those are not some happy parents right now," he said.

Officers would log more evidence after responding to a situation in which a woman said she had been raped. Officers photographed the scene and collected evidence, and Scharmack interviewed a suspect back at the station.

The bars had let out by the time officers finished investigating the incident for the night. Scharmack went back out on patrol to try and make a DWI arrest.

He pulled over a woman for speeding on White Sands Boulevard but let her off with a warning, explaining that he didn't want to waste time that could be spent locating an intoxicated driver.

Another domestic situation call went out at 2:45 a.m., but activity began to slow down after that.

Scharmack and another officer took a meal break at the IHOP restaurant. He said he'd probably spend what remained of his shift checking in with businesses and making sure buildings hadn't been vandalized.

At 7 a.m., officers finished their shift and went home to rest up. Their next shift started in 12 hours.