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November 9, 2015

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Approved by

**BAKERSFIELD:** The owners of the Tropicana Motel will pay \$547,500 to settle a case brought by the Kern County District Attorney's Office for operating a motel with substandard living conditions that led to the displacement of approximately 150 tenants. The settlement resolves a case that revealed multiple health and building violations that created unsafe living conditions for the tenants.

The case was investigated by the Kern County Public Health Services Department and filed by the Kern County District Attorney's office. It also involved the efforts of Supervisor Leticia Perez, who provided financial assistance in the amount of \$10,000 from her own office's fund to help with the relocation of the displaced tenants.

On October 9, 2013 after multiple inspections revealed ongoing, repeat violations, the Kern County Public Health Services Department's Environmental Health Division ordered the closure of the Tropicana Motel. The Public Health Services Department found that the Tropicana Motel, which is located at 1622 Union Avenue and owned by Bobby and Shobhana Patel, was substandard and unsafe to occupy. The inspections revealed vermin infestations including mice, roaches and bed bugs; plumbing hazards; exposed electrical wiring; inadequate and broken weather stripping; lack of adequate heating appliances; non-working smoke detectors; exposed electrical wiring; and general dilapidation. According to Matt Constantine, the Director of Public Health Services, this was one of the most egregious cases he has seen in his years with the County. Constantine said, "As a result of this horrendous situation, the Public Health Services

Department has deployed a hotel strike team, dedicating resources to ensure tenants living in high-risk motels are provided with healthy living environments.”

As a result of the closure, the Kern County District Attorney’s Office filed an action for unfair business practices against the Patels, seeking penalties, restitution, costs and injunctive relief.

The terms of the settlement require the payment of \$547,500. The displaced tenants will receive restitution in the amount of \$300,000. In addition, the defendants will pay \$50,000 that will be set aside by the County for future cases should tenants be displaced. The defendants will also pay \$175,000 in penalties and \$22,500 in costs, which will include reimbursement of \$10,000 in costs that were funded by Supervisor Perez for the displaced tenants.

Supervisor Perez said: “The multi-County department and community agency collaboration necessary to properly address the issues presented in the Tropicana case was unprecedented. I sincerely commend all those who provided resources and comfort to the families and children that were living in deplorable conditions at the Tropicana Motel. Let it be crystal clear to all motel owners in the area that such negligence and callousness will not be tolerated by our District Attorney nor the County.”

District Attorney Lisa Green commended both the Public Health Services Department and Supervisor Perez for their efforts in this case. “This case is an example of the various departments and offices within the county working together to resolve a serious issue for our community. We hope and believe that this case will send a strong message to other motel owners and will lead to increased compliance with state and local requirements.” The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney John Mitchell.