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**For Immediate Release**

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# Drug Dealer Sentenced for Selling Heroin that Led to Woman's Overdose Death

## *Case Highlights Increase in Heroin Overdose Deaths in San Diego County*

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today the sentencing of a defendant who sold heroin to a San Diego woman, leading to her fatal overdose. Marc Gressingh, 36, pleaded guilty to selling heroin and a prior conviction for narcotics sales. He was sentenced to eight years in local prison, but the judge split the sentence into one year of custody and seven years of mandatory supervision. The sentencing comes as more people are dying each year in San Diego County from accidental overdose or substance abuse intoxication of opioids, part of a national epidemic. Deaths in the County from opioid abuse have roughly doubled in the last 15 years.

**“An addiction to prescription drug opiates often leads people to begin abusing heroin, which is cheaper and easier to find,”** said District Attorney Summer Stephan. **“We’re responding to the opioid addiction crisis that is claiming the very lives of so many in our community and stealing the promise of their future by combatting this issue on multiple fronts.”**

*[RELATED: The DA's Office is taking a closer look at the fatal prescription drug abuse epidemic and what's being done to fight it, in a [series of short videos](#).]*

**“Prosecutions like this send the message that when you sell heroin to another human being, you are literally providing them with toxic poison that can slow their breathing to the point of death. We also focus on prevention through education and on providing important programs that work to get defendants who have substance abuse issues help through Collaborative Court programs like Drug Court, Behavioral Health Court and Veterans Court,”** DA Stephan said.

According to the San Diego County Medical Examiner, the increase in heroin deaths seen since 2005/2006 has continued, and heroin was the most common drug seen in those between the ages of 20 and 29 over the past five years. In 2015, 90 people died of heroin doses in San Diego County.

Today's sentencing is the culmination of a criminal case that began the morning of March 11, 2016. The San Diego Police Department responded to a reported death at a residence in San Diego. Paramedics on scene tried to revive the victim, Rebecca Mercurio, 31, however their efforts were unsuccessful and Ms. Mercurio died as a result of a heroin overdose. Based on initial reports that

Ms. Mercurio had purchased the heroin in the East County area, the San Diego Sheriff's Department took over the investigation into her death. After an extensive and lengthy investigation, Sheriff's Department Det. Jacob Sanchez was able to determine the defendant had sold Ms. Mercurio the lethal heroin at a taco shop in East County on the night of March 10, 2016.

On June 13, 2017, the defendant pleaded guilty to selling heroin, a violation of Health and Safety (H&S) code 11352(a). The defendant was sentenced today before Judge Lantz Lewis.

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*If you, or someone you know is struggling with addiction, there is help and resources at <https://www.sandiegorexabusetaskforce.org/>*