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For Immediate Release

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San Diego Man Sentenced for Pointing Laser at Police Helicopter

Commercial Aircraft Report Similar Laser Strikes at Lindbergh Field

San Diego County District Attorney [Bonnie M. Dumanis](#) announced today that a San Diego man has been sentenced to eight months in state prison for pointing a laser at a San Diego Police Department helicopter known as ABLE (Airborne Law Enforcement). Timothy Allen, 39, pleaded guilty to the charge in January and was sentenced in San Diego County Superior Court this afternoon.

“Laser strikes may seem harmless, but pilots take them very seriously,” said DA Dumanis. “I hope this case will educate the public about the law and the very real dangers associated with this kind of activity.”

In November of 2009, SDPD’s helicopter, ABLE 3, suffered a series of bright green laser strikes coming from a residence in southeast San Diego. The ABLE pilots tried repeatedly to pinpoint the source of the laser, but were unable to. During the same time period, the control tower at Lindbergh Field confirmed several commercial jets also reported green laser strikes in their cockpits while approaching San Diego International Airport to land.

On November 26, 2009 ABLE pilots returned to the area where they once again experienced laser strikes and were successful in determining the source of the laser. Allen was arrested and subsequently charged with two counts of Discharging a Laser at an Occupied Aircraft in violation of Penal Code section 247.5, a felony. The defendant pleaded guilty to one of the counts on Jan. 12. Allen was also sentenced to an additional two years, eight months in prison for two other unrelated cases involving receiving stolen property, possession of a deadly weapon and vehicle theft.

Laser strikes have become an increasing problem for pilots. Depending on the strength of the laser and the altitude of the aircraft, even low-power lasers can distract and even temporarily blind pilots who are flying at low levels or attempting to land. The glare from a laser can make it impossible for a pilot landing an airplane to see the runway. Pointing a laser at an aircraft carries a penalty of up to three years in state prison. In an effort to educate the public, the International Laser Display Association has sponsored a [website](#) that describes the risks in more detail and shows a [video](#) of a real life laser strike on an aircraft.

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