

El Paso County Sheriff's Office

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Bill Elder, Sheriff



El Paso County Sheriff's Office

27 East Vermijo Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO 80903-2280

Sergeant Jason Garrett, Public Information Officer

Office: (719) 208-1455, Email: jasongarrett@elpasoco.com

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sheriff's Office Warns Public of Dangerous Social Media Challenge

The Sheriff's Office would like to alert the community, and in particular parents, caretakers, and others who influence children and teenagers, of the emerging "Orbeez" social media challenge. This challenge encourages participants, typically teenagers, to video themselves approach pedestrians and shoot them with water-filled beads from high powered water bead guns and to post the results on TikTok. Orbeez is a name brand of these water beads but there are numerous manufacturers. This challenge has resulted in serious injuries to victims and those responsible facing Felony level charges. Here are some additional details to know:

- Water bead guns are toy guns that shoot water-filled beads in semi-auto or full-auto modes
- The beads are sometimes frozen before they're used making them more destructive
- Velocity settings on some water bead guns can be adjusted to as high as 250 feet per second (similar to a bb gun designed to shoot steel bb rounds)
- Many of these water bead guns match the appearance of actual firearms; it's impossible at a quick glance to tell the difference (photos are attached to this media release)
- EPSO has seen an increase in reports recently by persons shot and injured by water beads, particularly in the Falcon area
- There have been numerous instances reported nationally of law enforcement officers who have been fired upon and struck by water beads after being confronted by teenagers brandishing these water bead guns

As you can imagine, this social media challenge has the potential for unnecessary, serious injury to victims as well as avoidable catastrophe. Worst case, the very realistic appearance of many of these guns creates a dynamic in which it could be only a matter of time until an armed citizen or law enforcement officer uses potentially justified deadly force against a prankster engaged in this Orbeez challenge who has what appears to be a legitimate firearm.

The Sheriff's Office encourages parents and caretakers to monitor their children's activity and ensure they are not equipped to be and/or participating in this challenge. This is a trend that all of us can bring to an end without further injuries to victims or, even worse, a tragic deadly end.

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