

5042

---

---

## NEWS RELEASE

---

---

City of Modesto  
Police Department  
Office of the Chief of Police  
Tuesday, December 31, 2002  
7:30 p.m. For Immediate Release  
Author: Doug Ridenour

### SEARCH CONTINUES FOR MISSING LACI PETERSON

Modesto, CA - Modesto Police Department investigators announce a reward for suspect(s) in a burglary and continue the search for Laci Peterson, the 27-year-old Modesto woman who has been missing since Christmas Eve. Police read a written statement in the disappearance, which may involve foul play.

At a press conference at Modesto Police Department at 2:30 p.m. today, Modesto Police explained that they are continuing to be hopeful, but increasingly discourage over Laci Peterson's disappearance. The search of rural areas outside the city limits of Modesto is being conducted with assistance of Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office Dive Team and helicopter air services. "We could not have searched the amount of area without the Sheriff's Department help. In addition, the community has assisted our efforts throughout the City and County areas," said Sergeant Ron Cloward, supervisor of the search teams. Searches conducted this far have yet to reveal any conclusive evidence or clues as to the expectant mother's whereabouts.

Police announced the reward of \$1,000 for information leading to the identification of the person(s) who burglarized a residence in the 500 block of Covena on December 24 to 26<sup>th</sup> of this year. Because the home that was burglarized close to the Peterson home, police are interested in talking to anyone who may know those involved. The suspects are three dark skinned males (not African American) short in stature. Also, police are looking for an older model full size van, tan or light brown in color with one or possibly two doors that open in the rear. Anyone with information is encouraged to call 209-342-6166.

At the conference today, police read a prepared statement from the investigation team "...as we continue to profile Laci's [Peterson] background, gather witness statements, recognize her close relationship with family and friends, investigate the circumstances of her disappearance, and in view of the timing with the holiday season, it is becoming more apparent that her disappearance is the result of foul play. The investigation is progressing forward with that as the main focus, but we have not ruled out other possibilities," said Detective Jon Buehler, Homicide Unit.

We are expanding our investigation to another phase. The tip lines will be opened and investigators will continue the investigation throughout the holiday. No press conference is planned for Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup>. The public is encouraged to call the police hotline at 209-342-6166 to provide any information they may have on the disappearance of Laci Peterson.

For additional information on this case, you may view the Modesto Police Department web page at [www.modestopolice.com](http://www.modestopolice.com). We are asking that the media utilize the numbers below and do not call the tip lines.

U:\NEWS RELEASES\peterson laci 123102.doc

5050