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## Film office hits record for permits

335 permits issued is record

When it comes to filming mainstream television shows and movies, Santa Clarita has turned into a mini version of Hollywood.

The film office reported Wednesday that 335 permits for location filming were issued during the 2007-08 fiscal year, which topped the previous fiscal year's 311 permits and set a new record for the office.

The figures represent an 8 percent increase in filming between the two fiscal years.

Despite a slowdown during last winter's writers strike, Jason Crawford, economic development manager for the city, said the film office was able to build up a "momentum" after the strike ended in January.

As a result, Santa Clarita is home to five television shows, including HBO's "Big Love," CBS's "NCIS," and "The Unit," FX's "The Riches" and NBC's "Knight Rider."

Other popular shows like "24" and "Weeds" have also filmed on a regular basis.

When it comes to the types of productions, Crawford said, "It's a little bit of everything," but primarily television shows.

"Some days you can have as much as seven or eight (groups) filming around town," he said about productions.

For instance, on Tuesday, seven shows were being filmed around town at locations ranging from homes and businesses to outdoor areas, while today will bring four productions.

"Every day, a lot of filming is happening," he said.

Along with filming on location, Crawford said work is done at the local studios, which includes Melody Ranch in Placerita Canyon and Santa Clarita Studios in Valencia.

Aside from the television shows, Crawford said movies are also being filmed in Santa Clarita.

One example is "Manure," starring Billy Bob Thornton, which has been in production and the possible filming of "Stay Cool" with Hillary Duff in the coming months. In addition, Robert Downey Jr.'s "Iron Man" was filmed in the Santa Clarita Valley. The scenes set in Afghanistan were filmed at Melody Ranch.

With so much filming, Santa Clarita brings all types of companies and services, which Crawford said the city hopes to capitalize on in the future.

According to a city conducted a few years ago, Crawford said they found that between 6,000 and 7,000 people involved in the movie industry live locally. Those people range from writers and producers to electricians and grips.

Additionally, 30-35 percent of a production crews live in Santa Clarita.

With a tremendous amount of filming in the local area, Crawford said the city wants to draw film-related businesses to the area.

"We are now beginning to focus on brick and mortar film businesses," he said, meaning opening more film studios, post production and visual effects centers.

The hope is to have more local people in the film industry.

"For every production that we can add to Santa Clarita, more residents can work locally," he said.

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