

NEWS

From Supervisor Gary Ovitt
Fourth District, San Bernardino County



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Emergency Response Enhanced in San Bernardino County

The San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services, a division of the Fire Department, has obtained an important new tool – 70 new tools to be exact – to enhance the county’s emergency management and response. Using almost \$100,000 of Homeland Security Grant money, the Office of Emergency Services purchased 70 satellite phones – the majority of which will be given to each of the law, fire and emergency management jurisdictions within the county’s expansive boundaries.

Supervisor Gary Ovitt responded to the news: “ This is an important addition to our ability to communicate in an emergency when time and coherence of information is critical.”

The County Office of Emergency Services (OES) staff will begin distributing satellite phones to the jurisdictions on Thursday, Feb. 7. The goal of purchasing and distributing the phones, which cost \$1,300 each, is to enhance the ability of the county’s many varied and widespread jurisdictions and disciplines to communicate and operate cohesively during an emergency.

The Office of Emergency Services secured the funding for the Satellite Phone Project out of the FY2006 Homeland Security Grant Program. On November 7, 2006 the County Board of Supervisors approved the allocation amount of \$96,973 to initiate and complete the project.

Using satellite technology, these phones will function as additional means of communication even when other lines of communication are impaired.

“These phones are not intended for day-to-day use,” said Denise Benson, Division Manager of the Office of Emergency Services. “They will serve as an alternate form of communication; another tool in San Bernardino County’s emergency management toolbox.”

OES will maintain a database with the contact information for each of the phones to improve interoperability between jurisdictions. Interoperability is an important concept for public safety officials because first responders and emergency managers need to be able to communicate during a wide-scale disaster. The phones are intended to help entities communicate across local, county, state and federal boundaries.

Each jurisdiction will be responsible for the cost of maintaining and purchasing air time for the satellite phones. In the Fourth Supervisorial District, the following jurisdictions received phones: Chino Valley, Montclair, and Ontario Fire; Chino Hills Sheriff’s Station, Montclair Police Department and Ontario police Department; and, Emergency Operations in Chino Hills, Ontario and Montclair.

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