

NEWS

From the Office of

Brad Mitzelfelt

Supervisor, First District
San Bernardino County



For information, contact
David Zook (909) 387-4830
www.sbcounty.gov/mitzelfelt

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Hospital Disaster Preparedness to Improve

SAN BERNARDINO – Hospitals within a three-county region will receive training and equipment to help them deal with disasters, after the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today accepted a grant from the California Department of Public Health.

The \$897,979 grant will be used to enhance hospital preparedness, including the hiring of an Emergency Medical Services disaster coordinator, training to deal with hazardous materials incidents, equipment to sterilize entire rooms, and other equipment, such as ambulances.

“These funds will enable hospitals to better serve the public during the difficult times following a disaster,” said First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, who also serves on the California Seismic Safety Commission. “We often have wildfires and floods, and we know a devastating earthquake is inevitable, probably in our lifetime. Anything that improves our preparedness will save lives and speed the recovery process afterwards.”

The grant money will be used to purchase two ZIMAK sterilizing systems, which can disinfect all the air and surfaces within a vehicle, a portable shelter or an entire room. The total cost of the two systems is \$115,565. One will be stationed at St. Mary Medical Center in Apple Valley for use by High Desert hospitals, and the other will be based at the County-operated Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton for use by valley hospitals.

The Board of Supervisors also approved a contract with RB Associates in the amount of \$101,168 to provide training to hospital medical staff on how to decontaminate medics, patients and staff involved in hazardous materials incidents. All 18 hospitals in the County will receive the training.

The grant included money to hire a Local Emergency Medical Services Agency Disaster Coordinator. The coordinator will participate in state and local disaster planning meetings and will evaluate hospital preparedness in all three counties served by the Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency (ICEMA).

The Board of Supervisors is the governing body of ICEMA, which oversees emergency medical services for San Bernardino, Inyo and Mono counties.