

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 6, 2007

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County warns residents to be prepared for flooding

The National Weather Service and other forecasting agencies are predicting rain, heavy at times, for the next several days. Therefore the county is warning residents in and below areas recently burned by wildfires to be aware of and prepare for the possibility of flooding.

County public safety officials and crews will be monitoring weather conditions around the clock for the duration of the storms and will be poised to alert threatened communities should the need arise. The county has several strategies and tools at its disposal, including the Telephone Emergency Notification System (TENS), door-to-door and loudspeaker notifications, electronic message signs, physical and remote monitoring of flood-control channels and basins, and strategically positioned heavy equipment and heavy-duty rescue units.

Residents are urged to be aware of their surroundings and approaching weather systems. They are also urged to review and update their emergency and evacuation plans, and if roads leading away from their property are in danger of being washed out, to identify the nearest high ground. Heavy thunderstorms can develop quickly and county crews may not have time to organize a formal door-to-door evacuation.

Residents are advised to stay clear of flood control debris basins and channels. Persons can be swept away by a surge of water run off, mudflow, or debris flow. These areas are also dangerous when it is not raining as persons may become trapped in mud and debris by venturing onto what may appear to be stable soil. Do not drive where water is over the road as floodwaters can rise rapidly and sweep a car and its occupants away.

Additional information can be obtained by accessing the San Diego National Weather Service website at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sgx> or disaster, recovery, and flood information listed on the county web page at www.sbcounty.gov.

The County Fire Department Office of Emergency Services will regularly update the Disaster Recovery link on the county website with flood preparation and safety tips as information becomes

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available. Recorded information is available by calling (909) 355-8800. The public can contact the Department of Public Works 24 hours a day at (909) 387-7910 to report any storm/flooding problems or ask questions. The National Weather Service invites the public to share weather information as events occur – such as inches of rain, mudslides, and flooding – by calling (858) 675-8700.

A limited number of free sand and sandbags are available at county fire stations. Fire station addresses as well as information on placement of sandbags is available on the county web site.

The San Bernardino County Flood Area Safety Task Force (FAST) is conducting frequent conference calls with the National Weather Service on developing storm conditions. FAST members include officials from various county departments, cities, and state and federal emergency agencies.

County agencies have been working non-stop since before the fires were contained to prepare residents for flooding and to lessen the effects of post-fire mud and debris slides.

County agencies have been conducting community meetings and distributing flyers and other disaster information. Crews have been patrolling the burn areas and affected watersheds and removing debris that could cause blockages. One key effort involved the removal of blackened trees, which could fall into waterways and create artificial dams that would eventually break loose and unleash torrents of water, mud, and debris. Some downed trees were actually used to line the banks of streams to help direct water away from populated areas.

The county Department of Public Works is adding a rain gauge in the Butler II fire area, which should be operational by the end of next week. The department has crews on alert and patrolling the fire areas in the valley and mountain areas. The department has assembled packets of information that are being distributed by the Sheriff's Department to homes in the affected areas.

The county Solid Waste Management Division is continuing to provide debris removal information for homeowners in the burn areas. Asbestos removal is underway.

The county Flood Control District is installing surveillance cameras at the convergence of Plunge Creek and Oak Creek in the East Highlands Ranch area. The cameras will allow monitoring of the site from the Department Operations Center located in San Bernardino.

The county has scheduled its next community information meeting on the flood threat for Tuesday, Dec. 11 at 6:30 p.m. at Charles Hoffman Elementary School in Running Springs for the residents in Running Springs and Green Valley Lake. The county conducted a public meeting on Dec. 5 for the Fawnskin/Grout Creek area to alert citizens of potential flash floods, mud and debris flows. Department of Public Works Safety Assessment Teams (SATs) are also monitoring the storm and burn areas.