

# NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino  
[www.sbcounty.gov](http://www.sbcounty.gov)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 18, 2006

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## **County declares emergency, aims to waive fees for victims** *Officials continue to urge residents to be prepared for flash flooding*

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today ratified actions proclaiming a local emergency and requesting emergency declarations by the state and federal governments in connection with the Sawtooth Complex and Millard fires.

The fires have led to the death of one resident, injured 15 residents and firefighters, and destroyed approximately 50 homes in the Yucca Valley and Pioneertown areas.

At the suggestion of Supervisor Dennis Hansberger, in whose district the fires have occurred, the board also directed County staff to bring forth a proposal to waive waste fees and building fees for fire victims who must dispose of burned materials and then rebuild their damaged or destroyed homes.

The Board of Supervisors also heard reports from fire and emergency response officials on the status of the fire. The most important challenge facing the disaster area and its residents is the threat of flash flooding.

Forecasters are expecting thunderstorms to strike the burned hillsides, creating the potential for significant flooding and debris flows. Residents downstream of the burned areas are urged to update their family emergency and evacuation plans, and plan to move to high ground should rain begin. Severe thunderstorms and flash floods can develop quickly, and emergency crews may not have enough warning to conduct a formal evacuation.

"A half-inch of rain within an hour can cause flash flooding," said County Fire Chief Pat Dennen.

In the meantime, members of the Board of Supervisors commended firefighters, Sheriff's deputies, and all of the personnel who have responded to the fires.

"I have been through many fires," said Supervisor Hansberger. "I've never seen teams work more fluidly than they did during these fires."

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The County of San Bernardino has provided many innovative services to those affected by the Sawtooth Complex and Millard fires.

"The County of San Bernardino has done a remarkable job in creating and pulling together so many services in such a short period of time. I am very proud of the leadership the County has shown during this disaster," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Postmus.

In addition to the County firefighters and Sheriff's deputies who have responded to the emergency, the County of San Bernardino:

- Established a one-day Local Assistance Center in Yucca Valley to provide fire victims direct access to a variety of services, including Transitional Assistance, Aging & Adult Services, Building & Safety, Auditor/Controller-Recorder, Assessor, Behavioral Health, Public Health, Solid Waste, State DMV, American Red Cross, United Way, and Southern California Edison.
- Created a toll-free phone line (1-800-398-9931) to provide service information to fire victims and all residents of the disaster-affected areas. The county will keep the number active seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. until the current crisis is under control.
- Distributed flood warning flyers (see attached) door-to-door and in public gathering places in the affected area.
- Placed fire and flood information on the County website at [www.sbcounty.gov](http://www.sbcounty.gov).
- Activated the County's Telephone Emergency Notification System (TENS) to place calls to all land-line telephone numbers in the disaster area with recorded flood warning information.
- Public Works Department placed three electronic signboards along highways 62 and 247 to display flash flood warnings.
- Pre-positioned emergency response resources in the Yucca Valley area, including heavy rescue and front-loader equipment, small hand tools, and other items to aid in potential floods.

The County is also renewing its warning to residents in and below the burn areas to be aware of and prepare for the possibility of flash floods. Heavy thunderstorms can develop quickly and County crews may not have time to organize a formal emergency evacuation. This will be especially critical during the next 7 to 10 days.

Residents are urged to be aware of their surroundings and approaching weather systems. They are also urged to review and update their family emergency and evacuation plans, and if roads leading away from their property are in danger of being washed out, identify the nearest high ground.

In the meantime, the County will remain on constant watch and do everything possible to warn residents of approaching danger, including use of the TENS telephone warning system.

# -- WARNING --

## POTENTIAL FLOOD DANGER DOWNSTREAM OF BURN AREAS IN MORONGO BASIN

The recent fires have increased the chance of flash floods, and mud and debris flows from thunderstorms. The National Weather Service announced there could be thunderstorms in San Bernardino County starting within the next 24 hours. With these thunderstorms, areas downstream of the lands burned by the Sawtooth Complex and Millard Complex Fires may have large storm flows carrying mud and fire debris, clogging streambeds, bridges and culverts. Flooding can occur far from the burned areas. With no vegetation left to hold water, streams will fill quickly and increase the risk of flooding in regions below the burned areas.

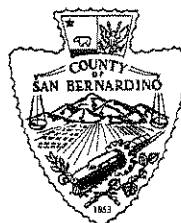
If you live in a low-lying region, protect your property by using sandbags or other measures. You can get a limited number of sandbags free-of-charge at most local fire stations. You can also find out where to get sandbags, and how to use them, on the County's web site at <http://www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/flood/>. Review your family emergency plans and prepare for possible power outages and disruption to roads and services. You should tell your children to avoid flooded areas and washes. Use extreme caution when crossing washes and arroyos, since flash flooding can occur in these natural drain areas. Motorists should never drive through running water.

County agencies are preparing to meet this potential flood emergency.

During an emergency, you should tune to your local Emergency Alert System (EAS) radio broadcast station for current emergency information.

95.1	FM	KFRG	Valley and High Desert
93.3	FM	KBHR	Big Bear Valley
98.9	FM	KHWY	High Desert
102.3	FM	KZXY	Victor Valley

For current weather information, check the National Weather Service site at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/vef/>, or listen to your local radio station.



## If You Are Ordered to Evacuate:

Never ignore an evacuation order. If a flood warning is issued for your area or you are directed to evacuate the area:

- Move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Take your family disaster supply kit.
- Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Turn off the gas, electricity, and water if told to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
- Open curtains and window coverings. Lock your home.
- Follow the planned evacuation routes and expect heavy traffic.
- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.

## Driving Flood Facts:

Remember these important points when driving in flood conditions:

- Do not try to drive across creeks or flooded roads.
- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars, causing loss of control and possible stalling.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles, including sport utility vehicles (SUV's) and pick-ups.