

NEWS

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Board OKs expansion of Emergency Operations Center

SAN BERNARDINO – During the peak of the annual wildfire season and as the County focuses on earthquake preparedness, the Board of Supervisors today approved a much-needed expansion of the County's Emergency Operations Center.

"Disasters are all too familiar to residents of San Bernardino County, and the Emergency Operations Center is the nerve center that coordinates our response during these crises," said First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, who as a member of the state Seismic Safety Commission has taken a leadership role in the County's disaster preparedness efforts.

"Our disaster coordinators and emergency responders do heroic work and this expansion will give them the facilities they deserve and need as they work to protect all our citizens during times of emergency," Supervisor Mitzelfelt said.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at 1743 Miro Way next to the Rialto Municipal Airport is a 6,000-square-foot facility with 14 employees. That is up from six employees in 2000. When the EOC is activated it can have 50 to 75 additional emergency responders from a dozen or more agencies working in very tight quarters. During emergencies, the EOC often operates 24/7 until the emergency is over.

In September, the Federal Emergency Management Agency awarded the County a \$323,943 grant for EOC expansion. It was the only jurisdiction in California to receive such a grant. The total cost of the project is \$512,000 with the balance to come from the County's Capital Improvement Program and other County funds.

Denise Benson, Division Manager of the San Bernardino County Fire Department Office of Emergency Services, who oversees EOC readiness, said plans for the EOC expansion have been underway since 2006.

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"This expansion of our County's Emergency Operations Center was made possible through support from our County Board of Supervisors as well as San Bernardino County's congressional delegation, especially Rep. Jerry Lewis," said Benson. "This will enhance our ability to coordinate our multi-agency response to both small- and large-scale disasters."

The 1,530-square-foot expansion will include a large training/conference room that will also provide necessary space during EOC activations, along with three additional offices.