

# News Release



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## **San Bernardino County Is Awarded CaliforniaVolunteers Grant**

### *Disaster Corps Program is First of its Kind in the Nation*

San Bernardino County today participated in a launch event for the new Disaster Corps Program, which will professionalize, standardize and coordinate highly trained disaster volunteers statewide. San Bernardino County is one of only five counties in California to receive a grant from CaliforniaVolunteers to participate in the new program, which is the first of its kind in the nation. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger addressed volunteers at the Hotchkin Memorial Training Center in Los Angeles at the launch event and was accompanied by Secretary of Service and Volunteering Karen Baker, California Emergency Management Agency Secretary Matthew Bettenhausen, and Division Manager of the San Bernardino County Fire Department Office of Emergency Services Denise Benson. Other dignitaries in attendance from the Los Angeles area included Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca and L.A. City Police Chief Charlie Beck.

San Bernardino County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers are organized by the County Fire Department's Office of Emergency Services (OES), and under the new program, as many as 200 CERT volunteers in the unincorporated areas will be given extensive additional training so that they meet Disaster Corps training, typing, certification and security screening guidelines. These trained volunteers will also be placed on a mutual aid list so that they may be deployed in other areas of the state should the need arise. The other four counties to receive the grant are Riverside, San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

"California is always leading the way and now we are the first state in the nation to integrate volunteers into our state emergency plan," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "Volunteers are an incredible resource, and no state has more giving, more passionate or more dedicated volunteers than California. Together, we will take volunteerism to a whole new level and make California better prepared and better equipped than ever before, for any emergency."

The enhanced training will focus mostly on existing volunteers and will include CPR and basic first aid training. The grant includes funding for 18 months for a Contract Volunteer Coordinator Position to oversee the program and the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors accepted the grant award at the June 22<sup>nd</sup> board meeting. There are more than 600 trained and certified CERT volunteers in the unincorporated area of San Bernardino County alone.

"We are so excited about this new program as it will provide specialized, enhanced training for volunteers in San Bernardino County to enhance their ability to respond on a mutual aid basis countywide during disasters," Benson said. "We believe this program will greatly add to the preparedness and readiness of our communities."

As a first phase of the program, CaliforniaVolunteers awarded Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and San Francisco counties a total of \$1.15 million in federal homeland security funding to support the background checks, First Aid/CPR training, and the volunteer coordinator position.

"Government can't do it all by itself," Bettenhausen said. "Being ready for the next disaster, and ensuring an effective response, includes taking advantage of the many contributions and passion of citizens who care deeply about their communities."

The launch event culminated in a rousing rendition of the three words "You! Me! We!" that Bettenhausen said exemplified the tenets of volunteerism.



Danny R. Wurl  
Fire Chief / Fire Warden