



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2008

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Board Approves County Emergency Operations Plan *Residents Encouraged to "Get Ready" During Earthquake Preparedness Month*

SAN JOSE, CALIF.— Today, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors approved the Santa Clara County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The all-hazards emergency response plan outlines the county's role in emergency preparedness, and coordinating and directing response and recovery operations in unincorporated areas of the County and providing support to the 15 cities during disasters such as earthquakes, floods, terrorist attacks and wildfires. During Earthquake Preparedness Month in April, residents are encouraged to implement emergency preparedness measures at home and work which may play a key role in both government and resident readiness for emergencies.

"The unanimous approval today of the Santa Clara County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan clearly reflects the high priority the Board has placed on preparing this organization for emergency response and recovery during a disaster," said Supervisor Pete McHugh, Chair of the Board of Supervisors and the County of Santa Clara Disaster Council.

While the Operations Plan covers a wide range of disasters including wild fires, floods and terrorism, the plan also addresses earthquakes which may be of significant concern for most residents. "Despite the region's history of earthquakes, and the 6.9 Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989, it may be surprising how many residents are not prepared and don't know what to do when an earthquake strikes," said Kirstin Hofmann, Director of the Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Services.

According to the Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Services, the best way to prepare for an earthquake is to develop a family emergency plan, assemble home and car emergency kits for food, water and other necessities, and be ready to be self sufficient for at least 72 hours.

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“A key factor in how residents respond to and survive a disaster such as an earthquake is based on how well they prepare,” Hofmann said. “Preparing yourself and your family before a disaster happens can make all the difference and save lives.”

The Office of Emergency Services outlines 10 ways you can be disaster prepared:

1. Learn which kinds of natural and human-caused disasters pose a risk for your area (earthquakes, fires, etc.)
2. Develop a Family Disaster Plan and put it in writing.
3. Build Disaster Supply Kits for your home, office, and car.
4. Choose an out-of-town contact person whom family members may call to report how and where they are during an emergency.
5. Know where to go during an emergency; designate a park, school or other convenient location.
6. Prepare your children and remember those with special needs, such as infants, seniors, and people with disabilities.
7. Include your pets in your Family Disaster Plan.
8. Eliminate hazards in your home and office.
9. Learn how to keep yourself and your family safe by taking first aid, CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and other preparedness classes.
10. Get involved -- donate blood, educate your neighbors, and join your local Citizen Corps and volunteer.

Resident preparedness is one aspect of the county's operational plan. During the first 72 hours of a disaster, there may be a disruption in utilities such as phones, water and electricity, as well as local businesses and roadways. Being prepared and self sufficient can make all the difference on how well the community responds and recovers from a disaster.

While disaster preparedness is essential, when a disaster strikes, the county is responsible for coordinating resources; supporting local jurisdictions; identifying the need for mutual aid and coordinating with state and federal authorities. During large scale disasters affecting more than one city, the county effectively becomes the coordinator of emergency response. The primary goals of the county's emergency management and response in a disaster are to provide effective life safety measures such as evacuations, coordination of shelter locations, and public health advisories; reduce property loss and damage to the community; and work to get affected business, community, and government services back online and functioning.

“We take our responsibility very seriously,” said County Executive Pete Kutras, who serves as the Director of Emergency Services in a disaster. “Our Board of Supervisors has invested in resources, and the entire organization has dedicated a considerable amount of time over the past year planning and preparing. We will do our best and we're asking residents to take the necessary action to prepare now.”

For more information on preparing for a disaster, go to www.sccgov.org.