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## **County Gears Up to Receive Katrina Evacuees**

SAN JOSE, CALIF.—County of Santa Clara officials are working with the American Red Cross, the City of San Jose, and community service partners, to welcome and provide services to Katrina evacuees.

“Our hearts go out to the victims of Hurricane Katrina,” said Supervisor Liz Kniss, Chair of the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors. “We are working collaboratively with the City, San Jose State University, the Red Cross, the County Office of Education and other community based organizations to help our neighbors through this trauma and to get them back on their feet.”

The County Office of Emergency Services (OES) worked throughout the weekend to coordinate local efforts in anticipation of the initial 100 Katrina evacuees expected to arrive in San Jose, and the possibility of additional future evacuees. The Office served as the primary contact with the State Office of Emergency Services and the Coastal Region OES to assure a coordinated local response. OES contacted cities within Santa Clara County to determine what resources they could make available to support the Katrina evacuation effort. The Office also gathered information from the American Red Cross and the Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley and passed it on to the cities.

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On Tuesday morning, key County Managers were greeted with an e-mail from County Executive Pete Kutas to report to a 9:30 a.m. meeting to activate and tailor the County's response plans to this event. Representatives from the American Red Cross and the Santa Clara County Office of Education also attended the meeting. Later that afternoon, County officials met with CADRE and a number of local community based organizations to determine what services they could provide.

For maximum efficiency and coordination Supervisor Kniss and Mayor Ron Gonzales led a joint meeting of County and City staff with the Red Cross and community partners to discuss interim housing options for the evacuees and roles of the respective participants.

"The American Red Cross will make the initial determination and in many cases refer evacuees to the County," said Pete Kutas, County Executive, County of Santa Clara. "We are prepared to receive the evacuees as though they were our own family members."

Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System with staff from Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and the Departments of Mental Health & Public Health will set up a medical response team at the intake site. Clinic staff will provide medical screening to determine the health status of each evacuee and as needed provide medical care, including medications and immunizations.

"We will provide an on-site clinic, where evacuees will be evaluated by physicians, including pediatricians," said Susan Murphy, Director of Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. "By bringing the appropriate medical and diagnostic services to them we will be able to help make the relocation process a bit easier."

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Mental Health workers will be on site to provide counseling and other mental health services. County officials are preparing to assist the evacuees in dealing with the traumatic effects of loss and relocation.

“We are very aware of the potential for health risks when individuals have been in inadequate facilities without access to health care or their medications,” said Dr. Martin Fenstersheib, Health Officer Santa Clara County. “We are prepared to address those health issues.”

County Social Service Agency (SSA) will have responsibility for assisting evacuees to determine their eligibility for benefits. SSA also will provide expedited access to Food Stamps and Medical. The Agency will work collaboratively with Red Cross to ensure that evacuees receive necessary income assistance and help them to process unemployment claims. Supportive services will be arranged for any temporary or long-term disabled evacuees.

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