County Of San Diego

Agenda Item

Board Of Supervisors

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First District

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Second District

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Third District

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Fourth District

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Fifth District

Date: **October 6, 2026** **10**

To: Board of Supervisors

Receive a Presentation on the County of San Diego's El Niño and Severe Weather Preparedness Actions Taken to Strengthen Community Preparedness, ~~and~~ Approve Amendments to and Sunset Date for Board Policy K-011, and Ratify a Proclamation of Local Emergency (Districts: All)

Overview

On September 15, 2026 (20), the Board of Supervisors (Board) received a presentation on the County of San Diego's (County) preparations for El Niño and severe winter weather. The presentation highlighted work underway across County departments and with regional partners and communities to prepare for potential flooding and other weather-related impacts.

Following the presentation, the Board directed staff to return on October 6, 2026, with additional information focused on unincorporated communities impacted by the January 22, 2024, floods. Specifically, the Board requested an update on the following four areas:

1. *Lessons Learned and Emergency Planning:* A one-page summary of what the County learned from the flooding in January 2024 and what changes were made to the County's Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan as a result.
2. *Drainage Infrastructure Readiness:* The current condition and maintenance schedule for existing drainage infrastructure at nine locations identified by the Board.
3. *First 24 Hours of Response:* How the County will respond during the first 24 hours of a significant storm event, including when the AlertSanDiego.org website will be updated, when text alerts will be sent out, when and how the County will reach out to community partners, and when and where the first group of employees will be deployed to respond.
4. *Support for Residents:* What the County will do to help individuals and families who do not have the financial means to prepare for potential flooding from an El Niño event.

Since the January 2024 floods, the County has continued to strengthen its approach to emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. This work includes updates to emergency plans and procedures, improvements in coordination across County departments and regional partners, infrastructure maintenance and readiness activities, and expanded efforts to provide residents with timely and accessible preparedness information.

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On September 21, 2026, Governor Newsom proclaimed a statewide state of emergency in advance of a potentially historic, record-strength El Niño event, further underscoring the urgency of the County's ongoing preparedness efforts. Among other provisions, the proclamation streamlines procurement and permitting so that State agencies can more quickly stage flood-fighting supplies, fast-track permits and technical assistance for local flood-control infrastructure repairs, and expand multilingual public preparedness communications, actions that align directly with the drainage readiness, response, and community outreach efforts addressed in this letter. The County Office of Emergency Services (OES) is coordinating directly with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and other County departments to determine how these streamlined State authorities can support the County's own preparedness and response efforts.

Today's actions request that the Board receive a presentation on the County's plan to prepare for El Niño in unincorporated communities impacted by the catastrophic flooding on January 22, 2024, as directed by the Board on September 15, 2026 (20) and approval of amendments to Board of Supervisors Policy K-011, Use and Distribution of County-Owned Sandbags and Other Resources, including an updated sunset review date, as part of the County's periodic policy review process.

On September 30, 2026, the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego, as Director of Emergency Services, proclaimed the existence or threatened existence of a local emergency due to the demonstrated potential for a very strong or historic-strength El Niño event to cause elevated coastal water levels and high-impact storms in San Diego County that warrants early, coordinated, and targeted preparedness actions to protect residents, critical infrastructure, agricultural lands, natural resources, and the region's economy. It is recommended the Board review and ratify the CAO's proclamation and find that there is a need for continuing the local emergency until no longer needed, subject to Government Code 8630 review requirements.

Recommendation by Chief Administrative Officer:
1) Receive a presentation on the County of San Diego's El Niño and severe weather preparedness efforts in response to the Board of Supervisor's September 15, 2026 (20), direction.

2) Approve amendments to and the sunset review date of December 31, 2033, for Board of Supervisors Policy K-011, Use and Distribution of County-Owned Sandbags and Other Resources.

3) Ratify the PROCLAMATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF A COUNTY-WIDE LOCAL EMERGENCY (UNINCORPORATED AND INCORPORATED AREAS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY) FOR THE PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR EQUITABLE RESPONSE TO, AND RECOVERY FROM ANTICIPATED IMPACTS FROM THE DEVELOPING 2026-2027 EL NIÑO, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO VULNERABLE AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES made by the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego as Director of Emergency Services on September 30, 2026 (Attachment F, on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors).

4) Find that there is a need for continuing the local emergency until no longer needed, subject to Government Code 8630 review requirements.

5) Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to allocate and use up to $1,000,000 within the Unlocked Reserves Framework in Finance Other to support emergent needs to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of County residents in response to a natural disaster, including wildfires, floods, or other severe weather events such as El Niño.

Equity Impact Statement
Severe weather and flooding can impact communities differently. Residents with disabilities, older adults, children, people with limited English proficiency, people without reliable transportation, and households with limited financial resources may face additional challenges preparing for, responding to, and recovering from an emergency. The County of San Diego's preparedness efforts include planning for these needs and working with community organizations and other trusted partners to provide accessible information and connect residents with available resources. Today's presentation also addresses the Board of Supervisor's request for information about assistance available to individuals and families who may not have the financial means to take preparedness actions on their own. Taking action on Board of Supervisors Policy K-011, Use and Distribution of County-Owned Sandbags and Other Resources, helps communities access sandbags to protect themselves and the environment.

Sustainability Impact Statement
Today's actions support the County of San Diego's Sustainability Goals by strengthening community and infrastructure resilience to severe weather and flooding. Preparing before storms occur, maintaining critical infrastructure, coordinating emergency response, and helping communities understand and reduce their risk can lessen the impacts of future disasters and support a more resilient region.

Fiscal Impact
~~There is no fiscal impact associated with receiving the presentation or with approving the amendments to Board of Supervisor's Policy K-011.~~ Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Operational Plan in Finance Other. If approved, this action will result in a one-time cost of $1,000,000 to support the County of San Diego's (County) emergency response to a natural disaster, including wildfires, floods, or severe weather event such as El Niño or other natural incidents. The funding source is prior year unrestricted General Fund balance, made available as unlocked reserves attributable to the safety-net services portion of the Unlocked Reserves Framework in Finance Other. There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years. If future actions related to the County's severe weather preparedness and response efforts require additional funding, staff will return to the Board with identified costs and funding options for consideration.

Business Impact Statement
N/A

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Advisory Board Statement
N/A

Background
On September 15, 2026 (20), the Board of Supervisors (Board) received an update on the County of San Diego's (County) preparations for El Niño and severe weather. Following the presentation, the Board directed staff to return on October 6, 2026, with a more detailed plan focused on unincorporated communities impacted by the January 22, 2024, floods.

The Board requested that today's update address four areas:

1. *Lessons Learned and Emergency Planning:* A one-page summary of what the County learned from the flooding in January 2024 and what changes were made to the County's Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) as a result.
2. *Drainage Infrastructure Readiness:* The current condition and maintenance schedule for existing drainage infrastructure at nine locations identified by the Board.
3. *First 24 Hours of Response:* How the County will respond during the first 24 hours of a significant storm event, including when the AlertSanDiego.org website will be updated, when text alerts will be sent out, when and how the County will reach out to community partners, and when and where the first group of employees will be deployed to respond.
4. *Support for Residents:* What the County will do to help individuals and families who do not have the financial means to prepare for potential flooding from an El Niño event.

1. Lessons Learned and Improvements Since 2024

Following the January 2024 floods, the County reviewed its response to identify lessons learned and opportunities to strengthen future emergency operations. Those lessons have informed updates to County emergency plans, procedures, training, and coordination. The County also conducted an After-Action Review to better understand both operational efficiencies and deficiencies where improvements were needed, and opportunities to strengthen future emergency response and recovery. The review, along with subsequent Board direction and additional assessments of the County's emergency management capabilities, resulted in recommendations that have been incorporated into ongoing preparedness efforts and the Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), as well as operations generally. Opportunities for improvement were identified in the following areas, with some examples of actions taken or underway in the following categories.

- Communication
- Alert and Warning Systems
- Clarity of Roles and Services
- Coordination with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Regional Partners
- Training
- Recovery Readiness

Communication

Essential to all organizations is an effective communications capability to support daily operations. In a disaster, these communications systems become critical. The magnitude of a particular emergency will determine the degree to which communications systems are used. The San Diego County Operational Area (OA) has 19 jurisdictions – 18 incorporated cities and one unincorporated area – as well as numerous special districts and military facilities that support several communications systems. The OA also coordinates with sovereign Tribal Nations as regional partners in emergency preparedness and response. In addition to common carrier communications (wired and cellular) networks, the updated OA plan (revised 2026) has robust interagency and interoperable wireless voice and data communications capabilities. Most recently, a Regional Working Group, supported by the Unified Disaster Council, was formed to develop shared requirements for a new countywide Common Operating Picture platform. The goal is to give regional partners a shared view of emergency information and improve communication and coordination during disasters. Additionally, the County is formally reactivating a regular cadence of meetings with city counterparts through the Cities/Government Sector to ensure timely coordination in advance of, and throughout the duration of, El Niño events.

To ensure robust, consistent, and frequent communication with Board Offices, a new Board Liaison Team has been established within the Incident Command System (ICS) structure. Ongoing communications with the Board will focus on new information and updates related to formal Board direction, informal inquiries, and district-specific actions or impacts during preparation and El Niño events.

Alert and Warning Systems

In addition to an effective communications capability, government must have an effective means to provide alerts and warnings to populations impacted or at risk due to an emergency. Following the 2024 floods, the County has continued to strengthen how emergency information is delivered across languages, accessible formats, and non-electronic channels so critical information can reach people in different ways. There are several regionally available alert and warning systems designed to provide San Diego County residents with emergency notifications. These systems include the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), which includes the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), and the AlertSanDiego/Accessible AlertSanDiego system. We know from the lessons of the 2024 floods that the County must stay committed to achieving and fostering an emergency management system that uses a whole community approach that is fully inclusive of individual needs and circumstances. This means translating all written and verbal materials into many languages, including American Sign Language, and sharing that information beyond our electronic formats.

Clarity of Roles and Services

Community feedback helped identify several areas where the EOP could provide greater clarity about roles, services, and available resources. Key updates focused on mass care and shelter, public information, evacuation and repopulation, and animal services.

- Mass care and shelter updates clarify shelter management responsibilities, transportation options for people with access and functional needs, alternative shelter options, accommodations for people with pets, and mass feeding operations.
- Public information updates provide additional guidance on emergency communications, including alert and warning methods, accessible communication channels, and how the public is connected with available resources.
- Evacuation and repopulation updates provide greater detail on evacuation processes, transportation for people with access and functional needs, Tribal government coordination, evacuation zones, and communication tools used to provide evacuation or shelter-in-place instructions.

  Animal services updates strengthen procedures for pet rescue and the sheltering of large or sick animals, as well as other animal-related emergency response needs.

Coordination with CBOs and Regional Partners

The County also strengthened coordination with community-based organizations and other regional partners. As part of developing the EOP, County OES used a whole community approach to engage community organizations and the public directly. Since 2024, this has included 21 Community Partner Meetings, two Tribal Informational Sessions, and more than 1,700 visits to the Engage San Diego project webpage. Engagement included organizations serving communities impacted by the 2024 floods, including trusted community partners such as Casa Familiar, the Jackie Robinson Family YMCA, the Urban Collaborative Project, and other grassroots organizations with established relationships in their communities. Through regional networks and working groups, OES also engaged organizations representing people with access and functional needs, food-system partners, nonprofits, Tribal Nations, and other community partners throughout the region.

This work was supported by closer coordination with the County's Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice and LiveWell Networks and Sectors, along with enhanced language accessibility tools and expanded transportation planning for people with access and functional needs. The updated EOP also established a Community Liaison position within the EOC to provide community partners with a direct connection to emergency operations and support two-way information sharing during an emergency.

Coordination has also been strengthened through the establishment of a new Outreach and Engagement Division within the Office of Emergency Services through the addition of five staff last fiscal year, each dedicated to community engagement and regional coordination. OES also revamped its Quarterly Regional Emergency Managers Meeting to strengthen coordination with regional partners and better identify emerging needs.

Training

Additionally, increased incident management training and exercises are occurring across the County's enterprise. Training includes the National Incident Management System (NIMS),

Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), and Incident Command System (ICS), the standard federal, State, and operational frameworks for coordinating emergency response.

The County is also expanding role-specific training for County leadership and EOC responders to strengthen familiarity with emergency roles, decision-making, and coordination during an activation. This includes annual refresher training, just-in-time training for employees who may be called upon to support critical functions, ICS leadership training, and a functional EOC exercise scheduled for October 2026.

More than 1,200 County employees have volunteered for dedicated emergency roles and received training, with continued recruitment and training underway to build greater depth for extended emergency operations.

The County also regularly participates in training and exercises with cities, Tribal Nations, public safety agencies, healthcare providers, utility providers, and other regional partners to strengthen coordination across the Operational Area.

Recovery Readiness

The EOP defines roles and responsibilities and establishes how agencies coordinate during an emergency. While the EOP primarily focuses on response and life safety, it recognizes that recovery begins while response operations are still underway. The updated EOP strengthens this transition by establishing new roles, including an Early Recovery Coordinator, who begins coordinating recovery activities during response operations, generally within the first 48 hours of an incident when conditions allow. As an incident moves into sustained recovery, those responsibilities transition to a Recovery Manager who leads the broader recovery effort.

The County also maintains a separate Recovery Plan, which is being reviewed and updated based on lessons learned from the 2024 floods and other after-action priorities. Since the floods, the County has taken several steps to strengthen recovery readiness, including pre-identifying Local Assistance Center locations to reduce setup time, strengthening shelter readiness and updating the Emergency Shelter Management Plan, establishing contracts to support emergency feeding and transportation, and strengthening rapid damage assessment and community recovery coordination. The County is also developing a pre-established process to manage financial donations following disasters.

Attachment A provides the one-page summary requested by the Board on September 15, 2026 (20), outlining key lessons from the January 2024 floods and actions taken or underway to address them.

2. Drainage Infrastructure Readiness

The County Department of Public Works (DPW) maintains a wide network of critical infrastructure within the unincorporated area, including roads, bridges, drainage systems, and other

public assets that require ongoing attention. DPW crews conduct regular inspections, address issues before they escalate, and deploy resources strategically as conditions change, while also quickly identifying emerging needs during rain events and mobilizing immediately to clear debris or make necessary repairs. As part of this work, crews regularly inspect nearly 20,000 drainage facilities throughout the year and schedule cleaning for those identified as needing service. DPW also performs street sweeping, tree trimming and vegetation removal to reduce the risk of material being swept into storm drains by runoff and creating blockages when storms arrive. DPW crews are proactive in reinspecting drainage facilities in areas known to have been affected by past flooding to ensure that storm drain infrastructure is clear before major storm events and then cleaned again, if needed, soon after a storm to ensure that these facilities remain ready throughout the storm season.

The extreme amount of runoff experienced during the multiple, successive winter storms in 2024 contributed to San Diego County Flood Control District (District) infrastructure damage at locations in the unincorporated area across four Supervisorial Districts (1, 2, 4, and 5). Emergency projects to repair these storm drains and return them to service were all completed by October 2024, and annual inspections resumed. In response to the Board's direction on September 15, 2026 (20), DPW staff conducted a thorough review of the current conditions and maintenance schedules for existing drainage infrastructure at nine locations, completing the assessment on September 16, 2026. The inspections revealed that drainage systems at all nine sites are in satisfactory condition, generally clear of sediment and debris. Only minor vegetation encroachment was noted at a few locations, as well as light sediment accumulation - none of which would impede water flow. Specific findings by location are contained in Attachment B. DPW staff has conducted preventive maintenance and addressed these issues. At Los Coches Road, staff also observed a damaged perimeter fence, which will be addressed by chaining and locking the gate to secure the facility. As with other District and County sites, all nine locations remain on an annual inspection and an as-needed cleaning schedule, with Casa de la Torre Court also subject to more frequent inspections during rain events. DPW staff will continue routine monitoring and maintenance in line with these schedules.

3. First 24 Hours of a Significant Storm

The County's response to severe weather is tailored to specific conditions and needs and begins before rainfall reaches the region. To support this early activation and the actions taken during the first 24 hours of a storm event, the County uses a combination of pre-storm preparedness tools, coordinated multi-agency operations, community sheltering resources, and emergency transportation support. The County's meteorology team, housed in the County Weather Center in Kearny Mesa, is a critical resource that guides field operations preparedness and enhances public safety. The team actively reviews weather patterns and performs weather-related risk analysis to forecast potential impacts and maintains and manages the Automatic Local Evaluation in Real-Time (ALERT) system, the County's flood-warning network. In addition, OES coordinates with the National Weather Service, County departments, and other regional partners to increase readiness as conditions warrant. Depending on forecasted rainfall, DPW crews will adjust work

schedules to ensure responsive coverage to problems encountered on roadways, closing any roads deemed unsafe due to flooding or the presence of debris.

As a storm approaches and conditions escalate, County actions include updating public information on AlertSanDiego.org, issuing emergency alerts when protective action is needed, coordinating with cities and community partners, deploying field personnel and resources, opening or supporting shelters when needed, monitoring roads and infrastructure, and activating the Operational Area EOC when conditions warrant. With the Governor's September 21, 2026, proclamation of a statewide El Niño state of emergency already in effect, the County's first 24-hours actions are focused on drawing on that authority and staying ready to escalate further if conditions warrant.

Current Preparedness Tools Supporting the First 24 Hours

To support residents and streamline operations during the first 24 hours of a storm event, the County maintains several standing tools and partnerships:

- El Niño Web Hub (AlertSanDiego.org): Provides flood-preparedness resources, sandbag locations, storm information, and the Know Your Hazards tool to help residents understand local risks, all in one searchable location.
- Emergency Notifications (AlertSanDiego.org): Residents can register to receive emergency alerts by phone, text, and email, including notifications associated with their registered address.
- AlertSanDiego App: Provides another way for residents to receive emergency information and access County preparedness and response resources from their mobile device.
- Genasys Protect/Know Your Zone Website & App: Allows residents to view evacuation zones and receive zone-specific notifications.
- Road Services Request Hotline (877-684-8000) & Tell Us Now App: Allows anyone to report road problems in unincorporated areas.
- County Road Conditions Map & DPW social media (X, Facebook): Provide real-time roadway and infrastructure updates.
- Established City Coordination: County OES has met with the City of San Diego OES more than 10 times specifically for El Niño planning, ensuring immediate coordination and information-sharing when a storm occurs.
- Community Partner Coordination: Outreach to community partners begins before significant weather arrives and continues throughout the incident as conditions and community needs change. County OES uses established networks, including its Community Partner Relay Network, Live Well networks, Community Health Workers, and other trusted community partners, to share preparedness and emergency information and identify emerging needs. When the Operational Area EOC is activated, a Community Liaison provides a direct connection between community partners and the EOC to support two-way information sharing.

Operational Coordination During the First 24 Hours

During severe weather, the County conducts daily conference calls to maintain regional situational awareness, and a Cal OES representative is embedded in the EOC whenever activated to serve as

a direct link to State resources and streamlined authorities made available under the Governor's proclamation. If local impacts exceed the County's and the State's combined capacity to respond, the standard next step is for the Governor, at the County's request and supported by County damage assessments, to seek a federal emergency or major disaster declaration, which unlocks direct federal assistance.

When significant flooding occurs, the County's response is driven by the severity and location of the impacted area. County OES coordinates with DPW, the Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies, fire agencies, affected jurisdictions, and other partners to assess conditions, protect life and property, coordinate public warnings, and deploy resources. County Fire maintains specialized water rescue capabilities and can staff multiple water rescue operations as needed. Ahead of significant storms, County Fire works to ensure rescue assets remain available, personnel training is current, and, based on forecast conditions, specialized personnel and equipment can be pre-positioned to support rapid response in areas of greatest concern. DPW crews respond to road and drainage issues and close roads in unincorporated areas when flooding, debris, or other conditions make them unsafe. When conditions are safe, crews remove hazards, clear blocked drains, and work to reopen affected roads. DPW's 13 Road Stations allow crews and equipment to mobilize quickly to affected areas. Because the location and severity of storm impacts cannot be known in advance, the first deployment location is not predetermined. County personnel and resources are deployed to impacted areas as needs are identified, with initial assignments based on forecast conditions, field reports, public safety needs, and the location and severity of impacts.

Sheltering and Other Community Needs

As the response continues, the County coordinates sheltering and other essential community needs, including documenting damage, maintaining situational awareness, and developing plans for sustained operations and recovery. When an evacuation order is issued, local law enforcement quickly identifies a Temporary Evacuation Point (TEP). The Incident Command then coordinates with the responding fire agency, the Operational Area EOC, and the American Red Cross to bring canteen services and support staff to the interim location, where evacuees receive initial information and resources while a longer-term shelter, if needed, is stood up. AlertSanDiego and other public alerting channels direct evacuees to the established TEP.

Residents requiring sheltering beyond the TEP are transitioned to congregate shelters, with the American Red Cross serving as the primary agency designated to provide emergency congregate sheltering services. Shelters can typically be stood up within eight hours of activation, with common services such as health and mental health outreach available as part of initial congregate sheltering operations. Within congregate shelters, the American Red Cross also provides case management to help impacted residents identify appropriate transition plans. This may include transportation or other assistance to help residents transition to longer-term options, such as staying with relatives or neighbors or securing temporary housing.

If sheltering needs exceed American Red Cross capacity, the County can augment shelter operations through its Shelter Team Program. County shelter teams include trained shelter managers and workers who can support registration and reception, dormitory operations and

feeding, along with Health Services and Behavioral Health outreach. The County also maintains 12 shelter trailers throughout the region containing supplies such as cots, blankets and pillows, with each trailer capable of supporting up to 100 residents. For residents whose homes are made uninhabitable, the County also has contracts in place to support temporary non-congregate sheltering and case management, when needed.

Depending on the event, a Local Assistance Center is generally established within 24 to 48 hours once conditions allow, or when it is safe for residents and service providers to access the site.

Emergency Transportation

County OES manages two dedicated emergency transportation contracts with the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD), which can be used to provide free emergency transportation to residents, visitors, and first responders anywhere in the county, including all 18 cities, unincorporated communities, and federal, State, and Tribal lands. Transportation may include bus, rail, or paratransit services. In addition, Uber Transport is available if necessary. This includes transportation for individuals with disabilities or other access and functional needs, and for pets. For residents in high flood-impact areas with limited vehicle access, the County coordinates staging areas with MTS/NCTD or other available transportation resources to help move people to shelter locations or other safe areas.

Attachment C provides an overview of the actions the County may take during the first 24 hours following significant flooding, depending on the event itself, including operational coordination, public notification, community partner outreach, personnel and resource deployment, community support and initial damage assessment.

4. Support for Residents

The County recognizes that many individuals and families may not have the financial means to prepare for potential flooding from an El Niño event. The cost of emergency supplies and other preparedness measures can be a significant barrier for some residents. To help reduce these barriers, the County offers several no-cost preparedness supports, including free sandbags at predesignated locations throughout unincorporated areas, preparedness information and planning tools, and emergency updates and alerts through AlertSanDiego. The County and its partners also provide preparedness training and outreach in communities throughout the region, including information on measures residents can take before severe weather events. Residents and community organizations can also request County participation at community preparedness events through OES.

Sandbag access has been specifically expanded in the community hit hardest in 2024: the County has added a new permanent sandbag site at the Spring Valley Library. Sandbag distribution sites are checked for inventory and restocked at the start of rainy season, and again regularly throughout the season and before and after storms; sites are not pre-filled, which allows residents to fill as many bags as they need, though in extreme circumstances the County can pull together special teams to pre-fill bags in the areas of greatest need. If a flood event exceeds planned capacity, the

County may also stand-up temporary sandbag distribution pop-up sites in coordination with partners such as CAL FIRE and local fire districts, as was done during the 2024 storms.

The County also works with community-based organizations and other partners to connect residents with additional resources that can support household preparedness. This includes using existing community services and events as opportunities to bring preparedness information and resources directly to residents. For example, Personal Disaster Plans and other preparedness materials are being distributed through community food distributions, including at the Jackie Robinson Family YMCA. The County is also leveraging a large-scale food distribution effort led by Public Health Services in partnership with Feeding San Diego and the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank, which provides free food distributions at six community locations throughout the region. OES provided 1,500 Personal Disaster Plans for distribution through these events and is participating at select locations to provide preparedness information directly to residents. Public Health Preparedness and Response staff are also supporting disaster preparedness education through these events. The County can also use LiveWell on Wheels to bring information and resources directly into neighborhoods, while leveraging the broader Live Well San Diego network of more than 600 organizations and community partners to help extend preparedness information throughout the region.

Residents experiencing homelessness in the unincorporated area are further supported through the County's Homeless Outreach Team, which includes the Office of Homeless Solutions, the Sheriff's Homeless Assistance Resource Team (HART), and DPW. This team conducts weekly outreach in unincorporated communities and on Caltrans properties, shares El Niño information proactively with unsheltered residents, and can connect people to the County's Inclement Weather Program, and hotel-based sheltering accessible by calling 2-1-1, during severe weather. For residents who need to evacuate, transportation to shelter locations is addressed as part of the County's first 24-hours response, described above.

The County also uses existing programs and partnerships to support older adults and people with disabilities before and during emergencies. The Aging & Independence Services (AIS) Call Center (1-800-339-4661) provides a non-digital option for residents to receive information and assistance by phone, request that information and resources be mailed to them, and receive referrals to County and community services. AIS also provides disaster preparedness education, including Silver Stay Ready preparedness events, with additional outreach planned in Spring Valley, and has trained volunteers to conduct preparedness outreach, including participants in the Sheriff's You Are Not Alone (YANA) program. Through a train-the-trainer approach, more than 400 people have received preparedness training. Additional targeted outreach is also underway with residents in 55+ communities in partnership with Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) groups. During an emergency, County programs can also use existing client information to identify people who may need additional support in impacted areas and connect them with information and resources.

In response to the Board's September 15, 2026 (20), direction, staff will continue evaluating opportunities to further expand assistance for residents who may face financial, transportation,

mobility, or other barriers to preparing for flooding. This includes continuing targeted outreach in historically impacted and at-risk communities, exploring ways to better connect residents with existing County and community resources and opportunities to partner with community-based and volunteer organizations to provide additional flood preparedness assistance.

Ongoing Severe Weather Preparedness

The County's work extends beyond the four items requested by the Board. The Severe Weather Preparedness Task Force (SWPTF) has brought together County departments and regional partners to identify risks, address preparedness gaps, coordinate public messaging and prepare for potential severe weather impacts. Most recently, the Governor's September 21, 2026, proclamation of a statewide El Niño state of emergency, described above, has added new State authorities and resources for the SWPTF to draw on as it continues this work. County OES is coordinating with Cal OES to identify opportunities to use the State's streamlined authorities and resources to support local preparedness and response. This includes identifying resource needs that may be supported through expedited State procurement of materials, goods, and services, as well as opportunities for State support related to flood-control readiness and public preparedness communications.

The SWPTF's approach focuses both on County operational readiness and community preparedness. This includes preparing County personnel, facilities, equipment and essential services while also providing residents with information they can use to understand their risk and prepare before severe weather occurs. Current actions include reviewing departmental readiness and resource needs, strengthening coordination for vulnerable populations, and expanding preparedness outreach and regional coordination. As needs are identified through this work, County OES will coordinate with Cal OES to determine whether additional State resources or assistance available under the Governor's proclamation can support local preparedness and response. This two-part approach has been a core focus of SWPTF's work.

Ongoing Outreach and Engagement

In response to the Board's September 15, 2026 (20), direction, County staff have begun developing a Severe Weather Preparedness Resource Hub to make preparedness information and resources easier for residents to find and use. The Resource Hub will build upon existing County resources and outreach networks, bringing information together in one place and working through community-based organizations and other trusted partners to help connect residents with available resources. Development of the Resource Hub will also incorporate community input to better understand preparedness needs and barriers, including those affecting individuals with access and functional needs and other residents who may need additional support preparing for severe weather.

The Health and Human Services Agency's Department of Strategy and Community Engagement (DSCE) has been partnering with OES to provide El Niño preparedness presentations at the *Live Well San Diego* Community Leadership Team meetings across the region, as well as to the Sector groups that were convened during the COVID response and continue to meet as an informational

and resources sharing venue. These joint presentations have been completed across nearly all Community Leadership Teams and Sectors, with the final presentation scheduled for October 7, 2026, in North County. This included a special Rural Communities Telebriefing on storm preparedness on September 24, 2026, focused on the county's unincorporated communities. In addition to OES experts, speakers included representatives from the Red Cross, CAL FIRE, and 2-1-1 San Diego. In addition, special outreach efforts have been initiated with the existing African American Clinical Advisory Group and the Flood Disaster Community Group, both in the Central Region, and a Stakeholder List of strategic community partners is being compiled to represent communities most at risk of flooding, including those in historically impacted areas. As another example of targeted outreach in historically impacted communities, the County is coordinating with the City of San Diego and District 1 on an El Niño Preparedness Town Hall in Shelltown on September 30, 2026. The event is intended to provide residents with practical, locally relevant preparedness information, including emergency alerts, evacuation considerations, sheltering and Temporary Evacuation Points, sandbag resources, and other steps residents can take before severe weather.

County OES also coordinates with the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), whose network of community and faith-based organizations helps distribute preparedness materials to their members, and other CBOs like the Jackie Robinson YMCA, which was heavily involved in the 2024 floods, and with 23 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) groups across the County that train community members and connect them with CBOs. OES is also expanding preparedness coordination with Tribal Nations. This includes working with CERT partners on Tribal-specific disaster preparedness training, inviting Tribal emergency managers to regional coordination meetings, and creating additional opportunities for regular coordination on preparedness and response. Tribal partners were also invited to participate in the September Rural Communities Telebriefing.

DSCE's Community Health Workers (CHWs) are supporting emergency preparedness by integrating preparedness into their routine outreach, distributing multilingual disaster preparedness booklets, and promoting resources like the AlertSanDiego app when they are out in the community. They also assist in reviewing emergency preparedness materials to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness. These efforts can also be supplemented by multilingual public preparedness communications made available by the State as part of its El Niño preparedness efforts. Additionally, CHWs have been trained through the Partner Relay Program with the Office of Border Health, which helps extend emergency information through multilingual trusted messengers and community partners, particularly for residents who may face language or digital-access barriers. CHWs can also be deployed during emergencies, such as flooding, to provide support to affected communities.

The County is also expanding non-digital outreach to reach residents who may not have reliable access to online information. Preparedness information can be shared through community meetings, physical signage, printed materials, County facilities and other high-visibility community locations. OES has also used flood-risk information to help identify areas for targeted in-person outreach. During an active incident, outreach teams can support door-to-door canvassing

in impacted communities when needed. County libraries and other County facilities can also serve as community information hubs by displaying and distributing printed materials, hosting preparedness activities, and supporting the printing and distribution of emergency information when needed.

To supplement the efforts of the Incident Command System that the EOC traditionally uses, County staff have also formed an El Niño Board Liaison Team to ensure effective 360-degree communication with Board offices regarding specific actions and communications expected before, during, and after an El Niño event. This team will supplement standard OES and media communications and tailor information and response to Board priorities, as needed. The Board Liaison Team is tasked with timely and effectively identifying, facilitating, tracking and communicating action on Board priorities and ongoing communications will focus on updates/ new information related to Board priorities.

County staff recognize and are here to serve the emergency preparedness response needs of our communities, before, during, and after a storm. These needs are as dynamic as the emergencies we face, but we will continue to work across the enterprise and with our partners throughout the region to support our communities, especially those most vulnerable, when disasters occur. We will continue to communicate with the public and the Board of Supervisors as we move into the El Niño season and beyond.

Board of Supervisors Policy K-011 Amendments

In accordance with Board of Supervisors (Board) Policy A-76, Sunset Review Process, County staff periodically review certain Board Policies. Board of Supervisors Policy K-011 is due for sunset review prior to December 31, 2026, and governs the use and distribution of County-owned sand, sandbags, and other erosion control devices. Staff are recommending amendments to Policy K-011 to clarify the criteria under which County departments may make these resources available to the public, expand responsibility for resident preparedness assistance to include the Department of Public Works, County Fire, and the County Office of Emergency Services, and update the priority order for use of County resources during flooding or debris-flow events to explicitly include protection of health, safety, and water quality. The amendments also update Policy K-011's sunset review date to December 31, 2033. The redlined policy is provided as Attachment D.

Ratification of a Proclamation of Local Emergency

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center has identified rapidly strengthening El Niño conditions in the tropical Pacific Ocean, with forecasters assigning a greater than 90% likelihood of a very strong event. Should this forecast hold, San Diego County can expect significantly above-average precipitation and elevated risk of flooding, landslides, debris flows, and coastal erosion throughout the 2026-2027 rainy season. Given the demonstrated potential for extreme peril to the safety of persons and property, the Chief Administrative Officer, as Director of Emergency Services, proclaimed the existence of a local emergency on September 30, 2026, pursuant to Government Code section 8630, in order

to authorize the County to undertake early, coordinated preparedness action in advance of anticipated storm impacts.

This anticipatory approach is directly informed by the County's experience with the January 22, 2024 storm, which produced the heaviest single-day rainfall in the region in more than a century and caused catastrophic flooding across the Southeast Planning Area and the community of Spring Valley. That event resulted in more than 200 rescues, damage to more than 800 homes, multiple fatalities, and the temporary sheltering of hundreds of residents, with the most severe impacts concentrated in historically underserved communities. The County's after-action review of that response found that residents and community partners often lacked clear, timely information about available resources and that stronger relationships with community-based organizations would have helped close that gap. The CAO's proclamation is designed to address the community's needs from the County before, rather than after, the onset of severe weather.

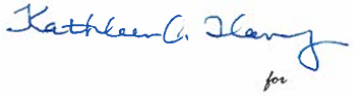
The proclamation authorizes a coordinated set of preparedness actions across County departments, including expedited emergency procurement of supplies and equipment; inspection and readiness of stormwater infrastructure and County facilities; coordination with Animal Services and Behavioral Health Services to support residents and their animals during evacuation or sheltering; and multilingual public outreach to residents, community-based organizations, businesses, and school districts to ensure the region's most vulnerable populations receive timely, actionable information. It also reactivates the County's City/Government Coordination Sector to facilitate bi-directional coordination with the region's cities and special districts, ensuring a unified regional response as conditions develop.

Because the Board of Supervisors was not in session at the time this local emergency was proclaimed, staff recommends that the Board ratify the Proclamation of Local Emergency (Attachment F) pursuant to Government Code section 8630, thereby authorizing the continuation of these preparedness measures and preserving the County's ability to request technical assistance and coordination support from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services and other state agencies as the 2026-2027 rainy season develops.

Linkage To The County Of San Diego Strategic Plan

Today's action supports the Community and Sustainability Strategic Initiatives in the County of San Diego's 2026–2031 Strategic Plan by strengthening emergency preparedness, supporting safe and resilient communities, and improving the County's ability to prepare for and respond to severe weather and flooding.

Respectfully submitted,



Ebony N. Shelton

Receive a Presentation on the County of San Diego's El Niño and Severe Weather Preparedness Actions Taken to Strengthen Community Preparedness, ~~and~~ Approve Amendments to and Sunset Date for Board Policy K-011, and Ratify a Proclamation of Local Emergency (Districts: All)

Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments

A. January 2024 Flood Lessons Learned and Emergency Operations Plan Updates
B. Drainage Infrastructure Conditions and Maintenance – Nine Identified Locations
C. First 24 Hours of Severe Weather Response
D. Board Policy K-011 (Info)
E. Board Policy K-011 (Clean)
F. Proclamation of the Existence of a County-Wide Local Emergency