

CALIFORNIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

2010 JANUARY STATEWIDE WINTER STORMS AFTER ACTION / CORRECTIVE ACTION REPORT

Executive Summary

January 17, 2010, marked the beginning of a series of storms that brought high winds and abnormally high precipitation statewide. According to the National Weather Service (NWS), California was experiencing an El Nino oscillation that moved from northern to southern California and brought heavy precipitation throughout the State. These storms resulted in loss of human lives, injuries, flooding, severe mud and debris flows, and record breaking snow falls. The impacted counties included Calaveras, Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Plumas, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Francisco, and Siskiyou.

The area hardest hit was in the community of La Canada Flintridge in Los Angeles County, which experienced significant damage from a mud and debris slide after a large rain cell traveled through the area. A conflagration in this same area in 2009 (the Station Fire) contributed to severity of mud and debris slides by increasing the instability of the ground. Evacuations and road closures were widespread throughout these areas due to the increased potential for mud and debris slides. EOCs were opened throughout the state to coordinate the ongoing emergency management response activities. Evacuation and warming centers were opened throughout these regions. Debris management as well as water quality were two ongoing issues addressed as the statewide incident unfolded.

Statistical Summary

- Two deaths
- More than 2400 homes were evacuated with numerous shelters opened in the impacted counties.
- Nearly 680,000 customers experienced power outages.
- Total estimated state and local response and recovery costs were estimated at \$59,000,000.
- 31 homes sustained major damage with uninsured losses.

Incident Period

January 17, 2010 to February 6, 2010

Summary of Key Findings

This report identifies areas in need of improvement and includes recommended corrective actions to address the needed improvements. The report provides specific information regarding these matters, and the following summarizes the key findings of this report:

- Demobilization processes were not consistent among EOCs.
- SEMS was successful, though problems were identified with communication through all SEMS levels.

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Organizations Contributing to this Report

State Agencies and Departments

California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA)
Department of Water Resources (DWR)
California National Guard (CNG)
California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA)
Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
California Department of Social Services (CDSS)
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)
California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA)
California Recycle (Cal Recycle)

Local Government/Operational Areas

City of Hesperia
City of Victorville

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EVENT DETAILS

Type of Event Storms, Mud Slide/Debris Flow, Snow

Locations San Francisco
Siskiyou
Los Angeles
Orange
San Bernardino
Riverside
Plumas
Imperial
Calaveras
Sonoma
Monterey
San Diego
Ventura

Incident Period January 17, 2010 to February 6, 2010

Brief Description of Event January 17, 2010, marked the beginning of a series of storms that brought high winds and large amounts of precipitation statewide. According to the National Weather Service (NWS), California was experiencing an El Nino oscillation that moved from northern to southern California and brought heavy precipitation throughout the State. These storms resulted in loss of human lives, injuries, flooding, severe mud and debris flows, and record breaking snow in the Big Bear area of San Bernardino and Siskiyou Counties. The impacted counties included Calaveras, Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Francisco, Plumas, Monterey, San Diego, Sonoma, Ventura, and Siskiyou.

On January 20, 2010, the Operational Areas (OA) of Los Angeles (Cities of Sierra Madre; Glendale; and Long Beach), San Bernardino, and Orange Counties activated their Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) resulting in the supporting activation of the Southern Region Operations Center (SREOC) and the State Operations Center (SOC).

The area hardest hit was in the community of La Canada Flintridge in Los Angeles County, which experienced significant damage from a mud and debris slide after a large rain cell traveled through the area. A conflagration in this same area in 2009 (the Station Fire), contributed to severity of mud and debris slides by increasing the instability of the ground. Evacuations and road closures were widespread throughout these areas due to the increased potential for mud and debris slides.

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Brief Description of
Event

(Continued)

In response to the amount of snow and rainfall, EOCs were opened throughout the state to coordinate emergency response activities including flood-fighting, evacuations, sheltering, emergency protective measures, and power restoration. Cal EMA also activated its Business and Utilities Operations Center (BUOC) to coordinate private sector resources, and support the restoration of power to areas experiencing outages as a result of the storms.

Proclamations and
Declarations

On January 21, 22, and 27, 2010, a state of emergency was proclaimed for the counties of Calaveras, Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Francisco, Sonoma, Ventura, and Siskiyou.

On March 30, 2010, a state of emergency was proclaimed for the counties of Sonoma, Monterey, and San Diego.

On February 11, 2010, Governor Schwarzenegger requested a federal declaration of a major disaster for the counties of Calaveras, Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Francisco, and Siskiyou. The Governor's request was based on the following facts:

- Two deaths
- At the peak, more than 2400 homes were evacuated with numerous shelters opened in the impacted counties.
- Cal EMA activated its BUOC to coordinate private sector resources including the restoration of power outages suffered throughout the state as a result of the winter storms.
- Nearly 680,000 customers experienced power outages.
- Total estimated state and local response and recovery costs were estimated at \$59,000,000.
- 31 homes sustained major damage with uninsured losses.
- On March 8, 2010, Presidential Disaster Declaration Number DR-1884 for the period of January 17, 2010 to February 6, 2010, in the following counties: Calaveras, Imperial, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Siskiyou.

On February 9 and 10, 2010, the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA) conducted a survey to determine the extent of damage and the type of state and/or federal assistance needed to support recovery efforts. In Los Angeles County, the damage survey revealed 31 homes sustained major damage with uninsured losses of at least 40 percent of their value, which met the minimum criteria for a physical disaster declaration. The counties assisted by SBA were Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Ventura.

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Summary of Proclamations and Declarations

Local Proclamations: Counties

January 19, 2010 – San Francisco
January 20, 2010 – Siskiyou, Los Angeles
January 21, 2010 – Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside
January 22, 2010 – Plumas
January 26, 2010 – Imperial, Calaveras

Local Proclamations: Cities

January 18, 2010 – La Canada Flintridge
January 20, 2010 – Seal Beach, Mt. Shasta, Sierra Madre
January 21, 2010 – Hesperia, Yucaipa, Apple Valley, Canyon Lake,
Calimesa
January 22, 2010 – Beaumont, Desert Hot Springs, Wildomar
January 25, 2010 – Big Bear City
February 1, 2010 – Jacinto
February 5, 2010 – Carlsbad
February 16, 2010 – Pacifica

Governor's Proclamation:

January 21, 2010 - Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Francisco,
Siskiyou
January 22, 2010 - San Bernardino
January 27, 2010 - Calaveras, Imperial
March 30, 2010 - Sonoma, Monterey, San Diego, Ventura

Presidential Declaration (FEMA 1884-DR):

March 8, 2010 - Calaveras, Imperial, Los Angeles, Riverside, San
Bernardino, Siskiyou

U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Declaration:

February 17, 2010 - Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino,
Ventura

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Operational Areas The impacted OAs participated in daily conference calls to receive a briefing from the NWS. The OAs of Los Angeles (Cities of Sierra Madre, Glendale, and Long Beach), San Bernardino, and Orange Counties activated their EOC. Other OAs impacted did not activate their EOC, but were on duty officer status.

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Coastal Region Response Coastal Region conducted conference calls for their OAs to provide the latest weather updates from Monterey and Eureka NWS. Coastal Region OAs then provided their situational weather updates to their respective partnering agencies/cities based upon the information received from the Coastal Region. Coastal Region staffing patterns were established to ensure the availability of staff in the event of a REOC activation due to the winter rain storms.

Southern Region Response The SREOC was activated in support of the Orange County OA.

State Agency Response California Department of Water Resources (DWR)
DWR participated in Cal EMA conference calls and provided a representative to the SREOC. DWR reviewed State Emergency Assessment Team (SEAT) and Burn Area Response Task Force (BARTF) reports for advance planning purposes; and addressed one potential and one actual request for U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) PL 84-99 assistance requests.

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
CDPH, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), and the Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) activated the Joint Emergency Operations Center (JEOC) in response to the 2010 Severe Winter Storms. CDPH programs involved in the response and recovery included: Office of Public Affairs; Emergency Preparedness Office; Licensing and Certification Division; and the Drinking Water Program. CDPH documented the status of all healthcare facilities within and surrounding the impacted area. CDPH monitored and assessed drinking water systems in affected counties and provided technical assistance, mutual aid, and bacterial testing to bring drinking water systems back online.

California Department of Social Services (CDSS)
CDSS staff participated in weather conference calls and began monitoring the event days prior to the storms. The CDSS duty officer collected and reported shelter population numbers and other shelter related information to the California State Warning Center (CSWC) on a regular basis.

At Cal EMA's request, CDSS deployed one Volunteer Emergency Services Team (VEST) member to the SREOC.

Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC)
The DTSC's Emergency Response Program (ERP) provided assistance in conducting an emergency response action to assess and remove household hazardous waste that posed an immediate threat to public health and the environment.

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State Agency
Response
(Continued)

California National Guard (CNG)

The CNG opened five armories as warming centers (Culver City, Ventura, West Los Angeles, Glendale and Sylmar) from January 20, 2010, through February 10, 2010. The CNG also placed rotary wing aircraft with hoist capability on two hour alert status to support rescue operations if required. A total of 72 CNG personnel supported these operations.

CalRecycle

CalRecycle provided staff coordination and technical assistance to the Los Angeles County Environmental Health Department Local Enforcement Agency during the La Canada Mudslides. CalRecycle also provided coordination between Cal EMA, DTSC, the Los Angeles County Environmental Health Department Local Enforcement Agency and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works for debris management issues.

Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA)

The EMSA Duty Officer participated in scheduled conference calls held by the NWS and Cal EMA.

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)

Work crews were requested from the CDCR. A total of 262 inmates and 12 staff members and six CDCR vehicles (regular transport vehicles) were used as well as CAL FIRE Emergency Crew Transport vehicles.

Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

CAL FIRE response included 43 Crews, 17 Engines, and 85 Overhead personnel. No further details available.

RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

Recovery Activities Recovery activities included in the AAR pertain to initial recovery activities that occurred before the incident fully transitioned from the Response to Recovery phase.

After the Initial Damage Estimate (IDE) and Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) processes were completed, the Governor proclaimed a State of Emergency and the President issued a Major Disaster Declaration providing access to the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) and Stafford Act funds for recovery efforts. A Small Business Administration declaration was also approved, providing an opportunity for eligible applicants to receive low interest loans to further fund recovery efforts.

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Recovery Activities (Continued) In response to a destructive mudslide and debris flow that damaged and destroyed homes in Southern California, Governor Schwarzenegger directed his departments and agencies to continue working closely with local, state, and federal authorities to help those impacted recover. Below is a brief description of the recovery activities in which state agencies participated.

California Department of Transportation (Cal Trans)

Cal Trans made available, debris removal equipment, including 2 dozers, 30 loaders, and 70 dump trucks. Supplementary equipment was also made available by Cal Trans Districts 8 and 12.

Department of Water Resources (DWR)

The DWR deployed flood fight personnel to assist with debris removal.

Cal Volunteers

Cal Volunteers identified up to 200 volunteers from local government volunteer programs and community and faith-based organizations to assist with clean up and debris removal in partnership with Los Angeles County. 100 volunteers from an inter-faith group were also on-site to assist with the clean-up efforts.

California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA)

The Cal EMA worked with the Los Angeles County to ensure debris removal activities were appropriately executed and documented to ensure eligibility under the CDAA.

SUMMARY OF SUCCESSES

Successes The following successes stood out above the standard procedures and outcomes:

The use of conference calls that included all SEMS levels with the NWS providing continual updated weather forecasts allowed jurisdictions to better anticipate resource needs.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

Area of Concern It was observed that the demobilization process was not utilized consistent with the SEMS guidelines. The following observations were made:

- The release of resources was not effectively communicated through all SEMS levels;
- Each EOC appeared to have different demobilization procedures; and
- The status of state resources was not accurately reflected in RIMS until days after resources were released.

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CORRECTIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation The SEMS-approved course of instruction includes a comprehensive section that describes in detail standardized demobilization procedures for all SEMS levels. It is recommended that all jurisdictions ensure their respective demobilization procedures are consistent with the SEMS-approved course of instruction and adhere to those procedures during the demobilization of resources.