

Disaster Wise



A Publication of the Cal OES Southern Region
Working to Build Disaster Resilient Communities!

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2016

RA'S CORNER

By **MONA BONTTY**
Regional Administrator

Happy New Year from the Cal OES Southern Region!

As an eventful 2015 came to a close, we started another busy year with an early REOC activation due to our first big storm of the Winter season. Just days into 2016, it was confirmed, El Niño is definitely upon us as six Southern Region counties activated their EOC's the week of January 4th! Thus, highlighted in this Edition of *DisasterWise*, we share with you our Region-wide El Niño preparations and response activities.

The Southern Region emergency management team of Doug, Jeff, Sonia, Jim, Joanne, Sherryl, Karla, Yolande, Yvette, Pastor, Jeanne, Lindsey and myself are here to serve and support you and thank you for your continued partnerships.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy, safe, and prosperous 2016!

Mona

El Niño Arrives in the Southern Region!

By *Lindsey Stanley, Emergency Services Coordinator*

As the reports continued to point to the 2015/2016 winter season as the strongest El Niño on record, a region-wide discussion was held to assess current preparedness efforts and capture the concerns of each county and special district group in the Southern Region.

On October 22, 2015, Cal OES Southern Region hosted a facilitated discussion on El Niño at the quarterly Mutual Aid Regional Advisory Committee (MARAC) meeting in lieu of the standard agenda topics. Cal OES was happy to also invite Kern County from the Inland Region to partici-



Photo by Lindsey Stanley

Attendees received critical state and federal flood event information, and an updated El Niño report.

pate, as their proximity to Southern Region causes them to be impacted often from the same weather events.

The meeting began with current El Niño and weather data from the National Weather Service. The Cali-

fornia Department of Water Resources and the United States Army Corps of Engineers also presented overviews of state and federal flood event resources and

request processes. The discussion on El Niño began with a roundtable of current planning and preparation activities within the region. Then, counties were asked to share best practices and lessons
(Continued on page 5)



Photo by Mona Bontty

Glendora residents prepare for El Niño in the Colby Fire burn area of Los Angeles County.



Photo by AFP/Getty Images

El Niño-driven storms have already begun slamming Southern California, causing flooding, mudslides, and debris flows.

Caltrans Exercises Storm Preparedness

By Joanne Phillips, Senior Emergency Services Coordinator

On December 4, 2015, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) held the statewide 2015 FloodCast exercise in San Diego County. The scenario for the exercise was a series of rain events in California similar to the ARkStorm scenario.

An ARkStorm, or Atmospheric River 1000 Storm, is a hypothetical, but scientifically realistic, megastorm event, which examines the effects of the storm, including environmental, social, and economic consequences.

The territory representative for San Diego County, Joanne Phillips, was invited to participate at the Caltrans District II (covering San Diego and Imperial Counties) Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

The key target capabilities tested throughout the exercise were pre-event preparation, communications, event response plan of action, EOC/Department Operations Center (DOC) management, Incident Command System (ICS) activation, and establishment of transportation corridors. The exercise was in agreement with Caltrans' mission during catastrophic events to facilitate restoration of mobility to the State Highway System and associated infrastructure impacted by the exercise events.

The exercise used the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and ICS, and utilized the Cal OES mission request process. A variety of scenarios were tested, including situa-

tions where passing Caltrans vehicles were stopped by local/city crews to assist clearing a road without an appropriate mission request, reports of water smelling bad at rest stops, flooding of a Caltrans yard, contacting field employees, emergency management coordination and information exchange with the County of San Diego, and Caltrans inundated with Cal OES mission tasks when their resources are depleted or mission tasked to assist in duties not normally performed by Caltrans.

This exercise helped confirm that Caltrans plans utilize best practices, reinforced the role of key partners, and provided lessons learned for a more robust response to the 2015/2016 El Niño winter season.



Photo by Joanne Phillips

EOC Operations during Caltrans exercise.

The exercise helped Caltrans confirm plans to utilize best practices for a more robust response to El Niño.

Region Hosts 3rd Speakers Series Event

By Jeanne Garcia, Emergency Services Coordinator

Cal OES' latest Speakers Series covered an important, yet frightening, topic – the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet. Lt. Andrea Grossman with the Los Angeles Police Department is part of a special crime unit that investigates child predators and their use of the Internet to prey on vulnerable children. Lt. Grossman's



Photo by Gregory Renick

Lt. Andrea Grossman shares information on Internet predators.

unit goes after offenders who target children from infants to 15 years old.

Grossman covered the online tactics sexual predators employ, including online chat rooms where they pretend to be peers, and sites where child pornography can be exchanged and pur-

(Continued on page 3)

Internet Crime Against Children is Widespread

(Continued from page 2)

chased. Often it is a child's own parents or relatives that commit these crimes. It takes a coordinated effort with many different agencies collaborating to seek out and prosecute these criminals.

Attendee Janet Andrews, the National Preparedness Specialist for the U.S. Postal Service, commented, "The topic of Internet crimes against children was not only educational and an eye opener, but also a demonstration of how local, state, and federal agencies work to-



Photo by Gregory Renick

Attendees from Law Enforcement and Emergency Management agencies learn about various online predator tactics.

gether to take a proactive approach to the risks, threats, and vulnerabilities of children on the Internet." It was surprising for many to compre-

hend how widespread these crimes are worldwide.

Lt. Grossman reminded the crowd the importance of talking to your children about the dangers lurking on the Internet, and looking out for unusual types of behavior by both offenders

and their victims. The Internet is a powerful tool that can be used for good and evil, and it is essential to be vigilant.

Government at all levels can work together and take a proactive approach to these risks and threats.

Support for Local Assistance Center in L.A. County

By Yvette LaDuke, Emergency Services Coordinator

A Local Assistance Center (LAC) was established by the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management (LA County OEM) to provide information and services to local community members impacted by a significant rainstorm that occurred on October 15, 2015. The storm caused flooding and mudslides that damaged several homes in the Lancaster area.

The LAC was opened for three days between October 30 and November 7 at Joe Walker Middle School in Quartz Hill. The LAC was a critical recovery service that provided a one-stop location where community members who were impacted by the rainstorm could speak with representatives from local and state

agencies, and service organizations including the American Red Cross, Los Angeles County 2-1-1, Salvation Army, Antelope Valley Disaster Relief Network, and Antelope Valley Partners for Help. Approximately 137 households visited the LAC during its three days of operation.

Cal OES Individual Assistance (IA) Section coordinated with LA County OEM to determine services needed by the impacted residents and worked to secure the participation of the state agencies. Cal OES Southern Region staff represented IA at the LAC, providing coordination and logistical support for state agencies, which included the Department of Motor Vehicles, Contractors State License Board, and the Department of Insurance.

In addition, the Cal OES Southern Region staff discussed the process utilized to determine the possibility for federal assistance to become available to individuals and businesses within the impacted area.



Photo by Jeanne O'Donnell

L.A. County OEM staff at the LAC.

LAC's are a critical one-stop recovery service for community members impacted by disasters.

Fun Day for Emergency Preparedness

By Jeannie Garcia



Photo by Mona Bontty

Twins Melania and Matthew enjoying a hug from Sarge!

“The event was a great day of community partnership highlighting emergency preparedness”

Families young and old enjoyed good food and fun displays as the Los Alamitos Area Chamber of Commerce sponsored the 2015 14th Annual Wings, Wheels, Rotors and Expo on the California National Guard Joint Forces Training Base (JFTB) in the city of Los Alamitos.

All activities took place on the flight line at Los Alamitos Army Airfield. Los Alamitos is the last remaining military airfield in the greater Los Angeles/ Orange County area. The JFTB is the Disaster Support Area for Southern California.

On display were military aircraft, helicopters, military equipment and many classic vehicles. Various civilian, city, county, state, and federal agencies involved in public safety and emergency preparedness participated in the days

events hosting booths.

The Cal OES booth displayed information on the drought, personal preparedness and disaster readiness and response guides. In addition, the Cal OES Telecommunications team demonstrated radio communication capabilities during an emergency.

Also joining the fun for the day was Sarge the Preparedness Bear, Cal OES’

beloved mascot since 2005. Sarge enjoyed greeting visitors, posing for pictures, and giving hugs to children.

Partnering with Cal OES was the Long Beach Fire Department, which exhibited their swift water trailer and its in-

ventory of equipment for river rescue.

Additionally, the Huntington Beach Fire Department displayed their Cal OES Type I Engine, which is as-



Photo by Mona Bontty

Southern Region staff joined by local response agencies. and 92nd Civil Affairs Battalion.

signed to the department by the Cal OES Fire and Rescue Division. Overall, “The event was a great day of community partnership highlighting emergency preparedness,” commented Jeff Toney of Cal OES.

WANTED

Cal OES Southern Region is looking for a new intern to join the team!

- ◆ Learn about Emergency Management
- ◆ Gain valuable work experience
- ◆ Be a part of the Region’s response during a disaster

Cal OES Southern Region’s intern program is an extraordinary opportunity for students majoring in emergency management or emergency response fields.

Desirable qualifications include an understanding of basic emergency management principles, computer programs, social media, and skills in verbal and written communication.

For more information, please contact Jeffrey Toney, Cal OES Southern Deputy Regional Administrator, at (562) 795-2910 or jeffrey.toney@caloes.ca.gov.

El Niño Discussion Prompts New Sharing Platform

(Continued from page 1)

learned from previous flooding or debris flow events.

Vulnerabilities within each county and regional issues, such as shared impacts, resource allocation and prioritization, and the Cal OES mission task process were discussed.

Another important topic, the use of Emergency Management Mutual Aid (EMMA), was discussed. EMMA was heavily utilized during the wildland fires in Lake County and Calaveras County in September 2015, which presented a valuable evaluation of the EMMA Plan's strengths and weaknesses. Southern Region members that responded to the EMMA requests provided important feedback that will be considered to enhance the EMMA Plan and request process.

Rounding out the discussion topics was an overview of the proclamation



Photo by Mona Bontty

Facilitator Nick Lowe leads the discussion of best practices and challenges from previous flood events.

process, which included some helpful information provided by Cal OES Recovery staff present at the meeting.

Many concerns were raised about proclamations and the reimbursement process, and, as a result, Cal OES Recovery Division hosted a series of Recovery Training workshops in Southern Region specific to flood disasters a few months later in December 2015.

The El Niño facilitated discussion was extremely well-received by the partici-

pants, which prompted a request to develop a platform for the region to continue sharing ideas, plans, and other information. Cal OES took the request to their website developers and have begun developing a statewide Share-Point platform for the local jurisdictions to access. Cal OES hopes that this new information sharing capability will be a beneficial tool for El Niño, and hopefully for future disaster preparedness.

Cal OES was extremely fortunate to have Nick Lowe, CPARS Consulting, LLC, generously donate his services as the facilitator. Mr. Lowe's extensive experience with emergency management and many of the region's partners allowed for a fruitful and successful discussion, and Cal OES thanks him for his time and expertise.

El Niño presents complex planning, mitigation, response, and recovery issues.

Busy Season of El Niño Outreach

By Mona Bontty

In anticipation of significant El Niño weather activity this winter, and amidst frenzied local media attention, many local, state, and national elected officials reached out to Cal OES to participate in various com-

munity outreach events to share best practices with community members in preparing for the upcoming rainy weather.

Southern Region staff attended evening and weekend meetings by joining representatives such as Senator Tony Mendoza, Assemblymember Autumn Burke, Senator Patricia Bates and Assemblymember Richard Bloom, in the El Niño town hall sessions. Attendee Ruby Arteaga, of Senator Mendoza's workshop, shared, "Storms.ca.gov is a valuable resource I will share with my neighbors, family and friends to help them prepare."

Other outreach included a tour of Camarillo Springs, which is a known vulnerable area, by ESC Yvette LaDuke, Ventura County Office of Emergency Services (OES), Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, and Assemblyman Das Williams.

LaDuke commented that, "Touring the vulnerable areas with both the Ventura County OES staff and local elected representatives, was an opportunity for the Region to partner with the County to demonstrate our support for all efforts to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from any disasters in the region."

"Storms.ca.gov is a valuable resource I will share with my neighbors, family and friends to help them prepare"



Photo by Mona Bontty

Town hall meeting with Senator Mendoza in Norwalk, Los Angeles County.

Spotlight on Imperial & Riverside Emergency Services Coordinator



Photo by Cal OES

ESC Pastor Guevara

“One day we are responding to a wildfire and the next day we are attending a planning meeting for El Nino.”

Pastor Guevara serving the role of Operations Section Chief during a recent Southern Region activation.

Photo by Lindsey Stanley

Working from the region’s coastal areas to its mountains and deserts, Pastor Guevara has been an Emergency Services Coordinator (ESC) for the Cal OES Southern Region for over three years. Initially, he served as the Southern Region Ports and Harbors Coordinator, assisting the ports and harbors in coastal counties from San Luis Obispo to San Diego in their preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation to all hazards.

Guevara transferred from the Ports and Harbors position and was recently assigned as the territory representative for both Imperial County and Riverside County after the departure of two region staff.



In the short time Guevara has been with Cal OES, he has responded to many incidents such as the Refugio Oil Spill in Santa Barbara and the Valley Fire in Northern California. The variety of incidents and dynamic nature that spans across multiple disciplines drives his interest and passion for emergency management.

“One day we are responding to a wildland fire and the next day we are attending a planning meeting for El Niño,” said Guevara, who holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Minor in Sociology, as well as a Master of Science in Public Administration from California State University, Los Angeles. “I am constantly learning new things every day.”

Prior to joining Cal OES, Guevara worked for the State of California for eight years as a Workers’ Compensation Adjuster at the State Compensation Insurance Fund and as a Deputy Labor Commissioner for the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement. So far, being an ESC has been the most challenging and rewarding position he has

held in his public service career.

“One of the most fulfilling assignments for me as an ESC was working in a Local Assistance Center (LAC) during the Valley Fire,” said Guevara. “It was rewarding to see the transformation of people who initially entered the LAC in a state of weariness and despair and then see them walk out with a smile and confidence that everything would be okay.” Guevara is also bilingual, fluent in both English and Spanish, and was



Photo by Pastor Guevara

Pastor and his family enjoying a day at the beach.

able to assist the Spanish-speaking visitors at the LAC.

Guevara lives in Whittier with his wife Anne, daughter, Isabelle, 11, and son, Ernesto, 5. He enjoys spending time with his family, watching television, and reading books about history and politics.

92nd U.S. Army Civil Affairs Battalion Visits Southern California

By Doug Huls, Deputy Regional Administrator

In October, Cal OES Southern Region hosted one of two 92nd Civil Affairs Battalion Teams that trained with Cal OES for 10 days. The 92nd Civil Affairs Battalion organizes, equips, trains, and deploys Civil Affairs forces to conduct Civil Affairs Operations in support of the

and participating in the planning and enabling of civil-military operations for the supported commander.

The Civil Affairs Team that trained with Southern Region consisted of Team Leader, Captain Matthew Conrad, Team Sergeant, Brandon Sheppard, Non-Commissioned Officer, Tyler Holman, and Team Medic, Sergeant Mathew Lentz. Also joining the Team was Team Observer/Advisor, Captain Vlad Skots.

During the visit, the Team visited with various levels of government and spent time with our region's local partners and Cal OES staff to learn how the

different levels of government interact with each other and the citizens of Southern California during disasters. They plan on using this knowledge to take with them on their upcoming deployment to Bosnia and apply their learned skills in similar situations.

Thanks to the Port of Long Beach Command and Control Center, the City of Los Angeles Emergency Management Department, the Los Angeles Department of Public Works, the

County of Los Angeles Office of Emergency Management, the Ventura County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services, and the San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services for sharing their knowledge and experiences with the Team.

The Team was also able to tour Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) in Redlands and get a crash course in all things GIS (Geographic Information Systems) as well as take a tour of the Los Angeles Threat Assessment Center (RTAC).

After their time in California, the Team returned to their home base at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, prior to their departure overseas. Cal OES Southern Region thanks the respective team members for their outstanding service to our country and the sacrifices that they and their families make every day to keep our nation safe.

Cal OES Southern Region is looking forward to hosting another team in April 2016.

The Civil Affairs Battalion plans to take what they learned on this visit and apply it in similar situations while deployed overseas.



Photo by Mona Bontty

The Civil Affairs Battalion, along with Cal OES Southern Region staff, visited the San Bernardino EOC.

United States European Command, and other theaters of operations as directed, in order to support combatant commanders and US Ambassadors in furthering US interests abroad.

Civil Affairs soldiers identify critical requirements needed by local citizens in areas that are susceptible to, undergoing, or recovering from combat or crises situations. Civil Affairs soldiers are primarily responsible for searching, conducting



Photo by Mona Bontty

The Team training at the Southern REOC.

Flood-Related Recovery Training Provided Region-Wide

By Lindsey Stanley, Emergency Services Coordinator



Photo by Doug Huls

Recovery training in Riverside.

Damages from flooding, debris flows, and mudslides present their own recovery challenges.

With El Niño storms already hitting the region, bringing flash flooding, debris flows, and mudslides, local demand for recovery information led to the delivery of three region-wide trainings by Cal OES Recovery Division.

The trainings focused mainly on the Public Assistance (PA) Program and process. Attendees were walked through the PA process and timeline, from the initial disaster through the project payments and the eventual close out of a federally declared disaster.

Some of the key items discussed were the importance of timely Initial Damage Estimates, what type of work, costs, and facilities are eligible for reimbursement, and how to formulate and organize Project Worksheets.

The day-long trainings were held from December 1-3, 2015, in Ventura County, Orange County, and Riverside County with full attendance at all sessions. The target audience of the training included local city and county emergency response departments, school districts, public works, auditors, legal-counsel, and finance staff.

The Recovery staff encouraged attendees to ask questions, including those specific to their own jurisdiction's unique situation. There was a high level of participation, and the trainings were successful in reaching a large and varied local government audience.

Cal OES Southern Region is looking forward to increasing the amount of recovery training provided to the region with the new Recovery staff working out of the Los Alamitos office. It is vital that all local jurisdictions be well-prepared before a large disaster hits.

Recovery Tips to Remember

- ⇒ **Local jurisdictions have 10 days from a rain event to proclaim a local emergency.**
- ⇒ **The 10-day clock starts from the last date of a rain event (i.e. last rainy day in a series of continuous rainy days).**
- ⇒ **Rain events are usually separated by two to three days of continuous dry weather.**
- ⇒ **If proclaiming, only request state or federal assistance if it is beyond your capabilities to respond to and/or recover from the rain event.**
- ⇒ **Remember to document all emergency protective measures and costs that are taken up to three days prior to a rain event.**

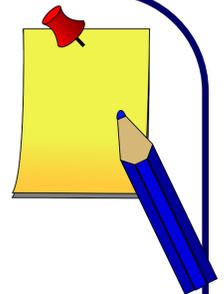


Photo by Rebecca Weber

Rebecca Weber, from Cal OES Recovery Division, now based in the Southern Region.

Santa Barbara Unveils New Mass Notification System

By Lindsey Stanley, Emergency Services Coordinator

Moving to the next level of emergency alert capabilities, the Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) launched a new mass notification system and website, *Aware-AndPrepare.org*, in January 2016.

The system, developed by Everbridge and purchased with a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, allows every jurisdiction in the county to send targeted messaging based on geographic location data, to resident's landlines, cell phones, work phones, and email addresses. The system also allows residents to communi-



Photo by Lael Wageneck

Santa Barbara County OEM's staff unveiled the new system at a media event.

cate their needs during an emergency and indicate evacuation status. The county and its eight cities are also able to use the system to contact key officials and depart-

ment personnel for internal coordination.

The website allows the public to create an account and add personal location and contact information, and provides an interface for the public to interact with other members of their community and their local emergency management agency. Ryan Rockabrand, Director of Santa Barbara County OEM, says that, "The website will act as a one-stop shop for emergency information."

The decline of landlines in the county makes this new system extremely valuable for communicating during emergencies.

Preserving REOC Function in a Damaging Earthquake

By Jim Acosta, Senior Emergency Services Coordinator

While we usually think of the Southern Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC) in Los Alamitos as an EOC facility, it is also the hub of several redundant communication modes used to support local governments in disasters:

- OASIS (Operational Area Satellite Information System) phone and internet system.
- The California state microwave phone system, which connects important state agencies.
- The California Warning System (CALWAS), which connects the California State Warning Center to each OA.
- The California Emergency Services Radio System (CESRS).

- Base and mobile satellite radio/phone which connects important state agencies

Recently, the Southern Region has been updating their Continuity of Operations planning. It was realized that, while the facility will probably survive a



Photo by Lindsey Stanley

Southern Region staff extend REOC communications equipment into the pre-determined safe zone.

damaging earthquake, the staff may be required to leave the

building until a structural assessment confirms it is safe.

This circumstance would cripple the Region's ability to help maintain communications with OA's damaged by the same earthquake.

A solution was developed and exercised in December 2015, in which staff on-site extended phone, computer network, and other communications lines outside the REOC facility as they evacuated out of the building.

Having the proper wiring and checklists in place will allow the task to be completed in about 10 minutes, minimizing risk to staff and preserving mission-critical communications to support the Region's 22 million residents.

The exercise helps ensure mission-critical functions can continue if the REOC is severely damaged in an Earthquake.

Training & Events

TRAINING/EVENT	DATE	AREA
Mutual Aid Regional Advisory Committee Meeting, Regions I and VI	January 28, 2016	Rancho Cucamonga, San Bernardino County
AWR-330 Incorporating Whole Community Inclusive Planning into the Emergency Management Process	January 28, 2016	Mammoth Lakes, Mono County
Train Derailment/HAZMAT Spill Exercise Series	January 29, 2016	Rialto, San Bernardino County
Basic PIO and JIC/JIS (G290-291)	February 8 - 11, 2016	Ventura, Ventura County
Essential Emergency Management Concepts (Earthquake), San Diego UASI	February 22 - 25, 2016	San Diego, San Diego County
AWR-330 Incorporating Whole Community Inclusive Planning into the Emergency Management Process	February 24, 2016	Rialto, San Bernardino County
Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program, San Diego UASI	March 29 - April 1, 2016	San Diego, San Diego County

For more information on upcoming trainings visit the CSTI website at <http://www.caloes.ca.gov/Cal-OES-Divisions/California-Specialized-Training-Institute>

4671 Liberty Avenue
 Los Alamitos, CA 90720
 (562) 795-2900
www.caloes.ca.gov

Follow us on Twitter:

@CalOES_SoRegion
 and @Cal_OES



Southern Region Staff

Cal OES Southern Region Core Values

PROFESSIONAL DEMEANOR & COMMUNICATIONS

* INTEGRITY * SERVICE *

* RESPECT * RESILIENCY *