

Public Safety

Background

Southern Santa Barbara County, because of its geology, topography and geography, is exposed to a variety of natural hazards, including fire, flood, earthquakes, tsunamis and landslides. It is also susceptible to possible human-created dangers, for example: from offshore oil rigs and shipping activity in the channel; from the transit through our area of hazardous materials via truck and rail; and from our downwind proximity to Vandenberg Air Force Base and the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. The unique topography of the area has created essentially three overland evacuation routes: north and south on Highway 101 and north on Highway 154 through the Santa Ynez Valley. Fire, flooding and landslides have shown that all three routes can become impassable during extreme events.

Our committee heard from the county's Office of Emergency Services (OES), which works with regional emergency planners. We were pleased to learn that reciprocal agreements are in place between counties to share resources during disasters. We agree with OES that much more needs to be done. We remain concerned about the adequacy of resources if an event disables the region's transportation system or affects us *and* the counties on which we would be relying for help.

We also heard from the Fire and Sheriff's Departments. The feeling of security that we enjoy in our neighborhoods is thanks in large part to the jobs these departments do every day. We were told that above and beyond their response to daily incidents, the departments are engaged in substantive disaster preparedness programs. Active public outreach in fire-prone neighborhoods, the seasonal work of "fuels crews" to reduce excess vegetation, implementation of a "Reverse 911" notification system along with patrol car and helicopter public address, creation of mobile command posts and interoperability of communications across agencies is just some of these efforts. Nonetheless, the point was made to us that the departments are already fully extended with their daily responsibilities. This is due in part to limited available funding and to difficulty in keeping personnel (a statewide problem during periods of low unemployment, exacerbated locally by housing costs). The "mutual aid" arrangements of these departments with other fire and law enforcement agencies offer us an additional measure of security for some types of events, but, again, if our area becomes inaccessible, mutual aid may offer limited help.

One of the most important things we drew from those presentations is an understanding that Eastern Goleta Valley residents need to be individually prepared for disaster. An on-going education process is vital so that residents know their survival responsibilities and are prepared to be part of the solution. Learning CPR and first aid, knowing how to turn off connections to utilities, practicing family evacuation drills, keeping supplies of food and water and having fresh batteries in smoke detectors are just some of the basics. An

1 awareness of what to do in different types of events is also key. As Deputy Fire Chief
2 Tom Franklin put it to us, “You have to take responsibility to take care of your own
3 property.” We would add, “...and your own family.”
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5 **The Future**

6 We see the Eastern Goleta Valley being part of a Disaster Preparedness, multi-hazard
7 functional plan that models various scenarios and provides for various options to
8 safeguard, and when necessary, evacuate Southern Santa Barbara County residents. There
9 are adequate numbers of fire, law enforcement, and disaster response personnel to meet
10 the area’s needs. Through strict land use requirements, public education and intelligent
11 deployment of public and private funding, steps have been taken, to the greatest extent
12 possible, to reduce the public’s exposure to significant hazards.

1 **Vision Statement**

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3 We are a safe community with exemplary fire and law enforcement services and realistic
4 disaster preparedness plans.

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8 **Goal #1:** We have in place preparedness plans and programs to assist residents in times
9 of disaster

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11 **Steps to Achieve Goal**

12 1. Execute reciprocal (mutual
13 aid) public works and
14 safety agreements between
15 neighboring jurisdictions.

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18 2. Initiate a study to model
19 evacuation routes; identify
20 problems with such routes
21 and remedy them.

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23 3. Coordinate multi-agency
24 effort to educate the public
25 on personal preparedness
26 for disasters.

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40 **We Will Recognize Success When:**

41 1. Outside hospitals and
42 organizations are ready to
43 assist Southern Santa Barbara
44 County during disasters.

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46 2. Public works departments of
47 neighboring jurisdictions
48 stand ready to offer mutual
49 aid assistance when
50 requested.

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52 3. An evacuation plan has been
53 successfully communicated
54 to the public.

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56 4. The County and individual
57 households are adequately
58 prepared for disasters.

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7 **Goal #2:** Adequate emergency services are available to our residents in the event of
8 disasters.

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10 **Steps to Achieve Goal**

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- 12 1. Evaluate current response
- 13 times and personnel to
- 14 determine if deficiencies
- 15 exist.
- 16 2. Identify and secure funds
- 17 needed to address resource
- 18 deficiencies.
- 19 3. Clearly communicate
- 20 resources needed to respond
- 21 to disasters.
- 22 4. Build a new jail in Northern
- 23 Santa Barbara County to
- 24 relieve overcrowding at the
- 25 existing jail.
- 26 5. Develop a new fully
- 27 equipped regional “Joint
- 28 Information Center”
- 29 (command and control
- 30 center).

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33 **We Will Recognize Success When:**

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- 35 1. There are adequate
- 36 emergency personnel and
- 37 resources needed to respond
- 38 to hazards and disasters.
- 39 2. A new jail exists in Northern
- 40 Santa Barbara County.
- 41 3. A new, fully equipped,
- 42 regional Joint Information
- 43 Center (JIC) exists and is
- 44 used for regular training
- 45 exercises.

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9 **Goal #3:** Development in the mountainous areas has been planned to include disaster
10 mitigation and adequate planning controls and infrastructure are in place before
11 development is allowed (e.g., vegetation clearing from structures, a water system for fire
12 fighting, adequate fire fighting equipment and personnel, etc.)

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14 **Steps to Achieve Goal**

- 15 1. Amend the Goleta Community Plan
- 16 and the land use development code
- 17 to insure that development in the
- 18 mountainous areas includes
- 19 adequate mitigations for disasters.
- 20 2. Amend the Goleta Community Plan
- 21 so that new development can only
- 22 occur when mitigations will be in
- 23 place to adequately protect against
- 24 natural disasters such as fire, flood,
- 25 land-slides, etc. before the
- 26 development is occupied.
- 27 3. Adopt the Residential Design
- 28 Guidelines.
- 29 4. Enforce vegetation clearing as
- 30 prescribed by the State of
- 31 California.
- 32 5. Provide adequate equipment and
- 33 personnel to address fires.

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40 **We Will Recognize Success When:**

- 41 1. New development in the mountains
- 42 is designed to mitigate exposure to
- 43 disasters.
- 44 2. County regulations are enforced
- 45 requiring adequate mitigation from
- 46 disasters before new development is
- 47 occupied.
- 48 3. Goleta Residential Design
- 49 Guidelines are adopted and enforced.
- 50 4. Adequate personnel and equipment
- 51 are strategically stationed; and
- 52 5. State of California vegetation
- 53 clearing standards have been adopted
- 54 and are enforced for new and
- 55 existing development.
- 56 6. Fuel management programs have
- 57 reduced the risk of fire.

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5 disaster preparedness plans.

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8 **Goal #4** Adequate fire, police and emergency personnel live near enough to the Eastern
9 Goleta Valley to respond in a reasonable time when needed in an emergency.

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11 **Steps to Achieve Goal**

We Will Recognize Success When:

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- 1. Find ways to provide
- affordable housing for
- police, fire and
- emergency personnel in
- or near the Eastern
- Goleta Valley.

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- 1. The County has been
- able to keep the fire,
- police and emergency
- positions fully staffed
- and turnover is reduced.

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