



OESNEWS

Governor's Office of Emergency Services

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OES Director Urges Californians to Remain Vigilant as Winter Storms Continue to Impact Areas of the State

SACRAMENTO – The Director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), Henry Renteria, today urged Californians to remain vigilant and prepared as the third in a series of winter storms continued to pass through the state.

"Even though the worst of this series of storms may be over in some areas, I urge every Californian to remain vigilant and prepared," said Renteria. "Winter storm warnings and flash flood watches remain in effect for many areas of California, and the winter season has only just begun."

The OES Director recommended that all Californians continue to monitor weather reports, review their family emergency plans, check their supplies and evacuate immediately if requested by local officials. He said residents of the burn areas should also familiarize themselves with signs of potential mud and debris flows by visiting the OES web site at www.oes.ca.gov.

"So far, the demand on state resources has been relatively light," said Renteria. "That's a tribute to California's robust emergency management system, as well as the planning, preparedness and mitigation efforts taken throughout California by local, state and federal agencies."

Renteria cited mitigation measures recently completed in the communities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe in Santa Barbara County, where a flood diversion channel was engineered to redirect threatening flood waters that have historically breached the levees impacting up to 23,000 homes. OES provided the grant funding to Santa Barbara County Flood Control, who said the system worked exactly as they had hoped during these latest storms.

On Thursday, Governor Schwarzenegger directed his Office of Emergency Services to prepare for heavy rain, snow, wind and flooding through the weekend.

On Friday, at the request of Governor Schwarzenegger, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) expanded President Bush's October 24, 2007, major disaster declaration for the Southern California wildfires to include eligible damages and costs related directly to flooding, mud flows and debris flows in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

On Saturday, the Governor proclaimed a state of emergency for Glenn, Kings and Sacramento counties, which have reported wind and flood damage to public facilities in their communities. The Governor's action enables OES to use additional emergency personnel, resources, equipment and facilities to support emergency response efforts in those communities and to provide reimbursements under the California Disaster Assistance Act.

Currently, the California Highway Patrol and the Department of Water Resources are inspecting levees along the Sacramento River Delta. In addition, utility workers are steadily restoring power to the more than 100,000 homes and businesses without power.

So far, there have been two confirmed storm-related deaths – a female who died when the vehicle she was in was swept down the Santa Ana River in San Bernardino County and a Yuba County worker who was killed by a falling tree branch.

“We will continue to monitor the situation throughout the state and work closely with the Department of Water Resources, the California National Guard, CAL Fire, the California Highway Patrol, Caltrans and California Utilities Emergency Association,” added the OES Director. “We have significant public and private-sector resources, including helicopters, hand crews, and swift water rescue teams available and ready.”

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