



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: January 26, 2011 REPORT NO:
ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
SUBJECT: Report on December, 2010 Flood Rescue Operations
REFERENCE: None

REQUESTED ACTION

This is an informational item only. No action is required by the Committee or the City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Accept the Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 18, 2010, the first of a series of storms arrived in San Diego. For the next thirty-six hours, across the region heavy precipitation saturated the ground and filled storm channels and waterways. On December 21, 2010, the Lifeguard River Rescue Team Leader advised the Lifeguard Chief that waterway levels in the City were unusually high, and with additional rainfall predicted by the National Weather Service over the next forty-eight hours, the City was likely to experience a serious flood event.

At 0650 hours, on December 21, the Lifeguard Communications Center received a report from the United States Border Patrol of people trapped by water in the Tijuana River Valley. Lifeguard River Rescue Team units responded and rescued three individuals from the Tijuana River. Over the next forty hours, all across the City, the Lifeguard River Rescue team rescued a total of seventy-three (73) people and seven (7) dogs, and responded to numerous other calls for service. In addition, the Lifeguard River Rescue Team assisted with evacuations of approximately seventy (70) people forced from their homes due to the floods.

The San Diego River through Mission Valley was the most impacted area of the City. With the exception of Interstate 805 and State Route 163, all streets across the river between Friars Road and Interstate 8 were flooded and impassable. Mission Valley had not flooded this severely since the storms of 1980. One rescue incident of particular note occurred at a hotel in Mission Valley. The occupied hotel became surrounded by fast-moving water. The Lifeguard River Rescue Team responded and, with tremendous support from Fire Operations, constructed a rescue system used to safely and efficiently move all fifty-one (51) occupants to safety.

For the duration of the flood event, affected City departments worked together cooperatively and efficiently to close streets, assist with evacuation notices, provide emergency medical services, clear clogged drains, remove mud and debris, and perform many other unusual or extraordinary tasks. Communication between City departments and divisions was exemplary. Conference calls and email chains used throughout the event ensured that City resources remained efficiently focused on priorities. One of the best examples of the efficiency and effectiveness of City crews was their ability to restore Qualcomm Stadium to "Bowl Ready" condition within hours after the flood waters began to subside.

Communication and cooperation were equally effective regionally. Entities throughout the County were responsive to water rescue oriented mutual aid requests. The Swiftwater Rescue Subcommittee of the SDR ALERT (San Diego Regional Aquatic Lifesaving Emergency Response Taskforce) communicated on behalf of member agencies throughout the flood event updating one another on changing conditions and availability of various flood rescue resources. At the Federal level, the San Diego Lifeguard River Rescue Team has developed a strong working relationship with the Border Patrol Search Trauma and Rescue team (BORSTAR). This relationship proved invaluable during the storms. BORSTAR units teamed with City Lifeguards to patrol and perform rescues in the Tijuana River basin freeing additional Lifeguard River Rescue Team units for assignment to Mission Valley.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS

The City incurred a significant expense in responding to this flooding, including approximately \$32,000 in overtime from the Lifeguard Division.

On January 10, 2011, City OHS submitted to FEMA and the State of California a preliminary list of damages and response costs from the December storm period. The City has since been notified that the County of San Diego has met the minimum loss requirement to qualify for a Presidential Declaration of a Local State of Emergency. That declaration is expected to occur within the next few weeks. Once issued, the City will be eligible for federal Public Assistance which provides 75% cost recovery for all eligible costs. State financial assistance provided through the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) will provide the City with 75% of the remaining 25% of eligible damages and activities (18.75%). The City would be responsible for the remaining 6.25% of the eligible costs and 100% of all ineligible costs.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTIONS

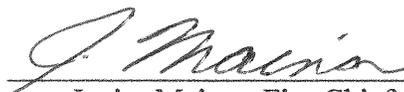
N/A

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

N/A

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS

Community and Citizens



Javier Mainar, Fire Chief