

## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED September 15, 2006 REPORT NO. 06-128

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee

Agenda of September 20, 2006

SUBJECT: San Diego Regional Aquatic Lifesaving Emergency Response Taskforce

(SDR ALERT)

#### **SUMMARY**

THIS IS AN INFORMATIONAL ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

## **BACKGROUND**

Prior to 1996, there was little regional interaction among emergency response agencies responsible for aquatic rescue. In 1996, seven local lifeguard organizations within San Diego County came together to collaborate on a plan to establish regional lifeguard training. This group of lifeguards approached Miramar College with an idea to partner and create a model for open-water lifeguard training similar to that already being done for law enforcement and fire science. They identified a series of courses, created course outlines for each, and designed the entire curriculum.

In 1997, the San Diego Regional Lifeguard Training Program was born and the first Regional Lifeguard Training Academy began. This program was the first of its kind anywhere in the United States.

As the community of local lifeguard agencies was working together on training, an ongoing dialog was in place asking questions about other ways to better serve the community, particularly with regard to operations. They identified a general gap in regional planning for aquatic emergencies such as air/sea disasters, flooding, and tsunami readiness. The United States Coast Guard took an active role in the conversation following a helicopter crash in Encinitas where local lifeguard dive teams and harbor police partnered with Coast Guard on the search.

It became obvious that the next right step was to create a working group that could add action to the ongoing discussion over regional operational readiness. In August, 2004, the first meeting of the San Diego Regional Aquatic Lifesaving Emergency Response Taskforce (SDR ALERT) was conducted. Monthly meetings are held. This community of professionals includes

representatives from federal, state and local agencies who have direct responsibility for aquatic rescue in San Diego County. Participating agencies include:

United States Coast Guard
Imperial Beach Lifeguards
North Island Lifeguards
San Diego Lifeguards
Solana Beach Lifeguards
Oceanside Lifeguards
San Diego County Sheriffs

California State Lifeguards
Coronado Lifeguards
San Diego Harbor Police
Del Mar Lifeguards
Encinitas Lifeguards
Oceanside Harbor Police

Members of Tijuana Civil Protection and the president of the United States Lifesaving Association also attend regularly.

# **DISCUSSION**

The mission of SDR ALERT is: "To unify regional emergency services to meet current and future challenges in routine and catastrophic water borne emergencies." The strategic goals to support the mission include:

- 1. Promote and provide education and awareness.
- 2. Identify aquatic first responders.
- 3. Develop training, operational guidelines and response plans.
- 4. Develop agency response agreements.
- 5. Leverage allied agency experience on grant submission.
- 6. Conduct training, including annual table-top and field exercises.
- 7. Develop solutions for interoperability communications.

SDR ALERT has been responsible for numerous successes in fostering regional cooperation and readiness. Some examples include regional air/sea disaster planning and exercises; regional swiftwater response planning and guidelines, and regional field training exercise on in-water missing persons.

Each participant attends with the purpose of representing the needs of their own community within the region. The group works together to create solutions using a holistic approach that meets the needs of both individual communities, as well as the region. To use a phrase coined by Ken Blanchard, "None of us are as good as all of us."

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