



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: CEO (OEM)  
Department No.: 012  
For Agenda Of: March 6, 2012  
Placement: Departmental  
Estimated Tme: 30 minutes  
Continued Item: No  
If Yes, date from:  
Vote Required: Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Department Michael Harris, Emergency Operations Chief  
Director(s) County Executive Office  
Contact Info: Joe Guzzardi, Certified Emergency Manager, 805-681-5526

**SUBJECT: Emergency Public Information for the Santa Barbara County Operational Area**

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors receives a report by the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) regarding continued improvements in emergency public information capabilities throughout the Santa Barbara County Operational Area.

**Summary Text:**

In recent years, much attention has been paid to the topic of emergency public information. The 2008-2009 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury filed a report entitled "Santa Barbara County Emergency Communications: Further Improvement Needed." In an effort to continually improve many of the critical functions of County government County staff has worked proactively to enhance emergency public information capabilities. This report is intended to demonstrate current capabilities, and present a sustainable plan to meet the needs of our citizens during emergencies.

**Background:** During any type of crisis, the public needs information in order to make informed and rational decisions. Whether the information involves saving lives, protecting property, or calming fears, the public needs accurate, easy-to-understand information delivered in a timely fashion. In order to address this important issue, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), in concert with all the jurisdictions and major agencies in the operational area, continues to implement a multi-faceted approach to establishing a countywide emergency public information effort. The four main components of this effort include Planning and Training, Equipment, Social Media and Technology, and Public Education.

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

### Planning and Training

As a vehicle to pursue the first of these key components, County OEM has teamed up with an existing committee of local information experts known as the Emergency Public Information Communicators (EPIC). EPIC was formed in 2004 following the Gaviota Fire, an incident that eventually highlighted the need to improve emergency public information. EPIC members include staff from public, private and non-profit entities throughout the Operational Area. The partnership of OEM and EPIC is expected to enhance our overall ability to better serve our citizens during times of emergency by building personnel depth and training across organizational boundaries.

EPIC follows a two-track meeting schedule. Monthly meetings will provide professional development, training and information sharing opportunities for members who are directly assigned to the Public Information Officer (PIO) function. These EPIC members will be exposed to formal training by subject matter experts. The intended result is to raise the level of professionalism and expertise for all who participate. Concurrently, and on a quarterly schedule, the full membership of EPIC will meet. Partner members, such as elected officials, elected official staff, media, etc., will join the PIOs for larger, more comprehensive information sharing opportunities. These full-committee working meetings will allow each of the varied member-groups of EPIC to learn from each other. The intended result is to improve communication among EPIC members, and thus improve the overall emergency public information function.

Previously County OEM has partnered with instructors to provide PIO training to selected staff within the operational area. In May 2012 EPIC and OEM are again hosting PIO training for selected staff. In addition, a workshop is being scheduled for the Board and their executive staff to discuss the very important role of the Board during emergencies and disasters.

### Equipment

County OEM has been involved in a long-term, consistent effort to improve communication capabilities countywide. Varied and redundant communication platforms, from high-tech to low-tech have been employed in an effort to ensure that emergency managers will always have at least one communication platform available regardless of the intensity of the local disaster. The current communication systems available to our effort include the County radio system, ham radio (ARES), conventional telephone (County and Verizon), conventional cell, Iridium satellite, Inmarsat satellite, remote teleconference, County video conference and a helicopter platform downlink showing real-time video feed for emergencies threatening the public.

### Social Media and Technology

Recent advancements in technology have resulted in many options under a fairly new category called Social Media. County OEM employs a variety of these, including Nixle, Facebook, Twitter, as well as the Sheriff's Reverse 911 system. Each of these social media options offers greater access to the community, thereby allowing emergency managers the ability to cast a wider net in distributing emergency public information.

**Public Education**

With full funding from our local philanthropic partners, and in cooperation with the jurisdictions within the operational area, OEM has contracted with an individual to work as a Public Education Coordinator. This bilingual individual is leading the operational area’s efforts to organize emergency and disaster public education efforts, including to the Spanish-speaking community. Activities include inventorying of social media websites used by local government agencies for emergency public information delivery, coordinating educational themes, monthly public service announcement (PSA) development in coordination with Santa Barbara City TV’s grant program, public outreach, and educational materials.

One of the important areas of the Public Education Coordinator is the development of a centralized web site that provides emergency and disaster public education information on days where no major incidents are active and allows people to go to their respective city emergency management web site. During an emergency, this web site could serve as a one-stop location where emergency public information can be posted.

**Performance Measure:**

EPIC will meet monthly (on the fourth Thursday of the month). Training is a component during 8 of the 12 meetings. Emergency public information will be incorporated into at least three exercises or drills per year in the Operational Area.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes. There are no costs associated with accepting this report. The activities discussed here are within the staff’s scope of normal work activities and are contained in the OEM budget. Using experts to work with staff on the Board workshop will be funded within the OEM existing budget.

**Fiscal Analysis:**

<b><u>Funding Sources</u></b>	<b><u>Current FY Cost:</u></b>	<b><u>Annualized On-going Cost:</u></b>	<b><u>Total One-Time Project Cost</u></b>
General Fund			
State			
Federal			
Fees			
Other:			
Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

Narrative: None

**Staffing Impacts:**

**Legal Positions:**

**FTEs:**

**Special Instructions:**

None

**Attachments:**

Board Presentation

**Authored by:**

Joe Guzzardi, CEM

**cc:**

Executive Committee, EPIC