



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:** September 10, 2019  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimated Time:**  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department: Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer and Director of  
Director: Emergency Services  
Contact Info: Matt Pontes, Assistant CEO  
Kelly Hubbard, Director of Emergency Management  
**SUBJECT:** Passenger Vessel *Conception* Incident – **Update and Local Proclamation  
Ratification**

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: NA

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: NA

**Recommended Actions:**

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive an update on the Passenger Vessel *Conception* Incident; and
- b) Adopt a Resolution ratifying the Proclamation of a Local Emergency related to the Passenger Vessel *Conception* incident declared by the Director of Emergency Services on September 5, 2019 when the Board of Supervisors was not in session, pursuant to Government Code Section 8550 et. seq. and Chapter 12, Section 12-5(a) of the Santa Barbara County Code; and
- c) Direct the Office of Emergency Management to return within 60 days for re-ratification of the Emergency until such time that the response and recovery conditions dictate otherwise; and
- d) Determine the above actions are not a “Project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, because the actions consist of organizational or administrative activities of the government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

### **Summary Text:**

On September 2, 2019, the U.S. Coast Guard and partnering agencies responded to a vessel fire off the north shore of Santa Cruz Island near Platt's Harbor in Santa Barbara County. Emergency responders encountered "Conception", a 75-foot commercial passenger diving boat based out of the Santa Barbara Harbor, fully engulfed in fire. The vessel sank to the ocean floor at approximately 7:20 a.m. Five of the 39 passengers were rescued by first responders that morning. As of September 6, there have been 33 confirmed deaths, the underwater search for one person is still ongoing, and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner has requested specialized personnel and equipment from outside of the Santa Barbara County Operational Area to assist with the recovery, and timely and compassionate identification of these people.

On September 5, 2019, the Director of Emergency Services proclaimed a local emergency, which is now before the Board for ratification. This incident creates conditions of disaster, which have been and likely to continue to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment and facilities of the combined forces of the Santa Barbara County Operational Area to combat. These conditions warrant and necessitate that the County proclaim the existence of a local emergency in order to utilize all resources necessary to respond to and recover from the local emergency and receive any needed funding through the California Disaster Assistance Act and any other State and Federal funds that may be available or become available.

### **Background**

The Conception boat fire and sinking is the largest maritime loss of life in California in more than 150 years. Santa Barbara County's ongoing response has included many county departments, hundreds of staff, and various county resources. The list of cooperating agencies to date is attached.

Initial response and Incident Command was established within Ventura County, as Ventura County Fire and USCG were the initial on scene. Once it was identified that the boat originated from Santa Barbara Harbor and was within the County of Santa Barbara jurisdiction, command was transferred to the Santa Barbara County. Unified command was established between Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, Santa Barbara County Fire Incident Management Team – 3, United States Coast Guard and National Park Service.

The following is a summary of response and support associated with the Conception Dive Boat Incident at the time of this report. Moving forward, the Unified Command and Incident Management Team (IMT) will continue operations until recovery, salvage and investigation efforts are completed. Efforts to support the families of the victims will continue as needed to support them through the Department of Behavioral Wellness.

### **Day I: Monday, September 2, 2019 –**

- Mayday Distress call from Conception to United States Coast Guard
- Ventura County firefighter boats arrived on scene
- Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activated at a Level 2, including a Joint Information Center (JIC)
- Coast Guard announced that the Conception sunk
- EOC opened Call center to handle public inquiries and provide limited information.

- EOC facilitated a Family Assistance Center (FAC) established at Earl Warren Showgrounds.
- Incident Command Post (ICP) officially transitioned from Ventura County to Santa Barbara County.

**Day 2 – Tuesday, September 3, 2019**

- Unified Command, Incident Command Post, Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) including Joint Information Center (JIC) operated 24/7
- Family Assistance Center operations opened 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

**Day 3 – Wednesday, September 4, 2019**

- Continued 24/7 Operations – Unified Command and Incident Command Post. Search and Rescue Operations transitioned to Recovery Operations.
- Family Assistance Center final day of operations. Staff continue to support families at alternate sites, via phone calls and vigil planning.
- Continued 24/7 Operations - Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Call Center transitioned to Duty Officer Status; JIC at the EOC continues to be staff by Unified Command to support field efforts.

**Day 4 – Thursday, September 5, 2019**

- Continued 24/7 Operations – Unified Command and Incident Command Post Recovery Operations. Department of Behavioral Health and partner agencies continue to support families at alternate sites, via phone calls and vigil planning.
- Santa Barbara County Director of Emergency Services Proclaimed a local emergency in response to the Conception Dive Boat Incident.
- Continued 24/7 Operations - Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) continue to support the incident and remain on Duty Officer Status; JIC at the EOC continues to be staff by Unified Command to support field efforts.

**Day 5 – Friday, September 6, 2019**

- Continued 24/7 Operations – Unified Command and Incident Command Post Recovery Operations. Department of Behavioral Health and partner agencies continue to support families at alternate sites, via phone calls and vigil planning.
- Continued 24/7 Operations - Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) continue to support the incident and remain on Duty Officer Status; JIC at the EOC continues to be staff by Unified Command to support field efforts.
- Conception Dive Boat Tragedy Vigil at the City of Santa Barbara’s Chase Palm Park.

This proclamation issued by the Director of Emergency Services covers the Santa Barbara County Operational Area (i.e., entire geographic area of the county), including cities, unincorporated county areas, and special districts. County staff is working with the Unified Command, IMT (Incident Management Team) and EOC Finance Section to compile an initial damage estimate. If California Disaster Assistance

Act (CDAA) reimbursement is approved, the County will reach out to our mutual aid response partners to offer potential reimbursement of eligible costs.

**Fiscal Analysis:** The fiscal impact of efforts in support of this incident is being evaluated at this time and will be reported to the Board at future meetings.

**Special Instructions:**

Direct Clerk of the Board to send a copy of the minute order to:  
Office of Emergency Management, Attn: Kelly Hubbard, Director

**Attachments:**

Attachment A: Resolution Ratifying the Proclamation of Local Emergency  
Attachment B: Proclamation of Local Emergency for Passenger Vessel *Conception*  
Attachment C: Conception Dive Boat Incident Cooperating Agencies

**Authored by:**

Kelly Hubbard, Director of Office of Emergency Management

**cc:**

Matt Pontes, Assistant County Executive Officer  
Bill Brown, Sheriff  
Mark Hartwig, Fire Chief