



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:** November 5, 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 Termination**

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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) Adopt a Resolution in accordance with Government Code Section 8630(c), terminating the Proclamation of a Local Emergency related to the Passenger Vessel *Conception* Incident declared by the Director of Emergency Services on September 5, 2019, and ratified by the Board of Supervisors on September 10, 2019; and
- b) 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:**

The attached resolution is to terminate the Proclamation of Local Emergency for the Passenger Vessel *Conception* Incident which was declared by the Director of Emergency Services on September 5, 2019, and was ratified by the Board of Supervisors on September 10, 2019. The response and coordination to the Passenger Vessel *Conception* incident, and the conditions of extreme peril no longer exist.

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. The remaining 34 passengers perished in the incident. The Conception boat fire and sinking is the largest maritime loss of life in California in more than 150 years.

Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner was identified as the lead response agency and established Unified Command for the purposes of search and rescue, recovery, salvage operations, law enforcement, coroner operations, and pollution prevention. In order to accomplish these operational goals, Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner 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. The Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center, Joint Information Center, Call Center and a Family Assistance Center were also established to support field operations and the families of the passengers and crew.

On September 5, 2019, the Director of Emergency Services proclaimed a local emergency, and the Board of Supervisors ratified the proclamation on September 10, 2019. The incident created conditions of disaster beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment and facilities of the combined forces of the Santa Barbara County Operational Area to combat. The conditions warranted and necessitated 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**

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 the response and support associated with the Passenger Vessel *Conception* Incident. All recovery, salvage and investigation efforts are completed, and therefore all field incident support functions have ceased. Investigation efforts continue with federal and local partner agencies. Additionally, support to the families of the victims and responders will continue as needed 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.

**Saturday, September 7 to Tuesday, September 10, 2019**

- Field operations were paused due to high winds and dangerous surf conditions that made conditions unsafe.

**Wednesday, September 11, 2019**

- Recovery and boat salvage operations were reinstated.
- Coroner confirmed that the final passenger was recovered and that next of kin notifications had been completed.

**Thursday, September 12, 2019**

- The Passenger Vessel Conception was lifted out of the water onto a barge and moved to Port Hueneme for ongoing investigation efforts.

The Proclamation of a Local Emergency issued by the Director of Emergency Services and ratified by the Board of Supervisors covers the Santa Barbara County Operational Area (i.e., entire geographic area of the county), including cities, unincorporated county areas, and special districts. The Office of Emergency Management, in coordination the Sheriff's Department, Santa Barbara County Fire Department and the Auditor-Controller's Office, submitted an initial response cost estimate of \$1.5 million to the California Office of Emergency Services. These estimated costs may include costs determined to be ineligible within California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) guidelines. The California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) has the County's request for consideration of CDAA reimbursement for eligible costs. The Cal OES has not indicated when it will determine which costs are eligible for reimbursement.

**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 Terminating the Proclamation of Local Emergency

**Authored by:**

Kelly Hubbard, Director of Office of Emergency Management

**cc:**

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