



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

**Submitted on:**  
**(COB Stamp)**

**Department Name:** Fire  
**Department No.:** 031  
**Agenda Date:** January 13, 2026  
**Placement:** Administrative Agenda  
**Estimated Time:**  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:** NA  
**Vote Required:** 4/5

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director: Garrett Huff, Fire Chief/Fire Warden  
Contact: Kelly Hubbard, 805-681-5526  
**SUBJECT:** **Proclamation of Local Emergency Caused by the 2025/2026 Holiday Storms, All Supervisorial Districts**

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: N/A

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Find that due to a series of atmospheric river storms that began on December 23, 2025 ("25STM3"), an emergency situation existed pursuant to Government Code sections 54954.2 and 54956.5 that required immediate action, which need for action arose after the agenda for this meeting was posted (4/5 vote required); and
- b) Adopt a Resolution ratifying the Proclamation of a Local Emergency declared by the Director of Emergency Services on January 9, 2026, 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 Fire Department Office of Emergency Management to return every sixty (60) days for ratification of the Emergency until such a time that conditions dictate otherwise; and
- d) Determine that the above-recommended actions are not a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(5), finding that the actions consist of administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment

### **Summary Text:**

This item is on the Board of Supervisor's Agenda in order to receive and update and adopt a Resolution ratifying the Proclamation of Local Emergency related to the 2025/2026 Holiday Storms. This emergency proclamation is required for the County to request inclusion in the State's disaster proclamation and enables requests for fiscal assistance from FEMA and the California Disaster Assistance Act. Because this requires immediate action and arose after the agenda was posted, a 4/5 vote is required to hear the item.

### **Discussion:**

Throughout the week following these impactful storms, County Departments and local government agencies within the county continued to identify damages. It was determined that these damages and ongoing impacts were significant. Emergency protective actions to respond to these storms and damages to government assets are currently estimated at \$7.6 million.

Under the California Emergency Services Act, the County has 10 days within an incident occurring to proclaim a local emergency and seek disaster assistance. Mona Miyasato, as the County Executive Officer and Director of Emergency Services proclaimed a local emergency on Friday, January 9, 2026. Per the regulation, the Board of Supervisor must then ratify this proclamation within 10 days of the original proclamation.

The County Office of Emergency Management has already submitted the initial proclamation to the California Office of Emergency Services and has requested consideration of State and Federal Assistance on behalf of the County, local agencies and our community.

### **Background:**

Multiple atmospheric river storms were forecasted to impact the entire county between the end of December 2025 and into the start of the new year. Heavy rainstorms started on December 23, 2025, and continued until January 3, 2026, with very few, if any breaks between storm cells or systems. These multiple atmospheric river systems have resulted in heavy rain, flooding, storm surges, coastal erosion, high winds, landslides, and shallow debris flows with impacts countywide.

### **Response and Impact Summary:**

- Starting on December 17, 2025, the Office of Emergency Management started coordination calls with the National Weather Service Oxnard/Los Angeles (NWS) and its partner agencies.
- On December 19, 2025, the NWS notified the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) of a forecasted atmospheric river starting December 23. Ultimately, the NWS sent over 50 weather statements.
- The OEM first notified residents on Friday, December 19 sharing critical information with residents on the storm, and how to prepare. Overall OEM sent 8 emergency alerts to community members. More information in the Emergency Alert Chart below.
- These storms produced heavy rain, flooding, landslides, storm surges, coastal erosion, high winds and shallow debris flows.
- Impacts include, but are not limited to:
  - Government and private property flooding, including a few County facilities.
  - Flooding and damage to local, state and federal highways, including a full closure of the 101 in both directions.

- Two temporary closures of the Santa Barbara Airport.
- Significant flooding, damage and closure of state parks.
- Damage to county parks and trails.
- The undermining and damage of Union Pacific Railroad tracks.
- Three major reservoirs within the County reached full capacity during this storm period, with Cachuma reservoir experiencing high peak inflows of ~20,000 CFS on December 25, necessitating Santa Ynez River downstream releases of up to 7,500 CFS through the following week.
- At least 2 separate swift water rescue or recovery efforts were conducted, with one storm related death.

#### Emergency Alerts Chart for 2025/2026 Holiday Storms:

Date	Type/Protective Action	Target Area
December 19, 2025	Major Storm	Countywide
December 22, 2025	Evacuation Warning	Identified properties in Lake Fire burn area
December 25, 2025	Flash Flood Warning	Southern and central Santa Barbara County
December 26, 2025	Evacuation Warning Cancelled	Identified properties in Lake Fire burn area
December 30, 2025	Flood Watch	South Santa Barbara County, Tepusquet Canyon/Gifford Fire area, and interior mountains
January 3, 2026	Flash Flood Warning	Southern and central Santa Barbara County
January 3, 2026	Flash Flood Warning	South coast/eastern SY mountain range
January 3, 2026	Storm Hazards Message	Los Padres National Forest areas near Lake Fire burn area

#### Storm Totals:

These storms are among the wettest starts to a water-year on record within Santa Barbara County. Below are some statistics:

- Countywide percent of “normal water-year rainfall” reached 105% (through January 4), including:
  - The most rain recorded through January 1<sup>st</sup> in the City of Santa Barbara in 127 years.
  - Exceeding rain totals of an entire average water-year
  - Representing over 3 times the rain typically received by this time of the year.
- A majority of the rain received so far this year was concentrated between December 23, 2025, and January 4, 2026.
- The December 23-26 Storm produced up to ~14.5” of rain in the County along with high locally intense rain (up to 1.46 inches of rain in 1 hour on December 25).
- December 31 through January 4 brought additional rain to already very wet watersheds, bringing multi-storm rain totals to over 22” inches, with some County locations reaching

extremely high rain intensity levels on January 3, 2026 (with up to 2.0 inches of rain in 1 hour).

The high volume and locally intense rain on wet watersheds produced enhanced runoff and flooding within the County.

- Three major reservoirs within the County reached full capacity during the first storm period.
- Cachuma reservoir experiencing high peak inflows of ~20,000 CFS.
- Inflows necessitated Santa Ynez River downstream releases of up to 7,500 CFS starting December 25 and continuing through the week.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:** No

**Fiscal Analysis:**

The fiscal impact of efforts in support of this incident are ongoing and being evaluated at this time and will be reported to the Board at a future meeting. Current eligible damage estimates are as follows:

- County Departments: \$4.8 million
- External Agencies (not including County): \$2.7 million
- Residential & Business Damages: \$300,000
  - South Coast and Santa Ynez Chambers are doing direct outreach for additional damage estimates as we believe these impacts are greater.
- 3 agricultural reports were filed. The OEM & the Agricultural Commissioner's Office is following up for cost estimates.

Per the most recently published Five-Year Forecast, the County is facing a projected \$23 million budget deficit in FY 2026–27, with the shortfall expected to grow to \$66.4 million over the next five years due to state and federal policy changes, declining revenues, and ongoing structural operating deficits. State and federal assistance will be critical to ensuring the County can respond effectively to current recovery needs while maintaining core services for residents.

**Special Instructions:**

Direct the Clerk of the Board to send an e-copy of the minute order and signed resolution to Kendall Johnston, [kejohnston@countyofsb.org](mailto:kejohnston@countyofsb.org).

**Attachments:**

**Attachment A** – Proclamation of Local Emergency for the 2025/2026 Holiday Storms.

**Contact Information:**

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Director, Office of Emergency Management  
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