



# Update on Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow Community Disaster Recovery Efforts

County Executive Office  
Office of Emergency Management  
Planning and Development

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# Purpose of Update

- Thomas Fire incident began on 12/4/2017; subsequent storm and debris flow events occurred on 1/9/2018.
- County is leading and managing the recovery effort in partnership with California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and other mutual aid partners.
- Numerous governmental agencies and community groups have joined the recovery effort.
- The report also includes updated preliminary cost estimates, per Board direction on 2/27/2018.





# Main Recovery Objectives

1. Return residents and open businesses as soon as is safely possible;
2. Support the repair and rebuild of homes, businesses, and residents' livelihoods as soon as possible; and
3. Develop resiliency throughout the community through disaster preparedness, mitigation and improvements, and social and individual resiliency.



# Roads and Bridges

Removal of material from County roads/bridges and restoration of utilities and County infrastructure.

- 50 miles of County roads impacted, 200 culverts, 20 bridges.
- 30,000 cubic yards of material removed from roads and cleared from bridges and drainages, but there is still material to be removed. This will be an ongoing activity for the next 2-5 years.
- Permanent restoration projects needed:
  - Culvert repairs
  - Bridge rail reconstruction
  - 3 County bridge replacements



# Basins and Channels

Flood Control responded by quickly clearing 11 debris basins in areas located below Thomas Fire burn area in Montecito.

- Worked with Army Corps of Engineers to clear debris basins totaling approximately 400,000 cubic yards.
- Initiated removal of debris from clogged channels in many reaches of creeks from Arroyo Paridon Creek to Montecito/Cold Springs/Hot Springs Creeks.
- Staff opened creeks and assisted Search and Rescue/ recovery teams.
- Stream channel and debris basin clearing will need to occur after each storm event for the next 2-5 years.



# Mud and Debris on Private Property

In order to maintain road traffic and safety and prevent congestion on County roads, the County identified resources to facilitate mud and debris removal from private property, including acceptable repository locations.

- Debris flow left enormous quantities of mud, soil, rocks and trees in its wake, in addition to structural, household, and vehicle debris. Majority of material is natural.
- County continues to develop and distribute guidelines, resources, and methods for safe debris removal including Materials Exchange Program.
- Ongoing collaboration with other agencies and entities to identify additional outlets. Tajiguas Landfill is a short-term solution for sorting, staging, and temporary storage of debris due to lack of local outlets.
- County has partnered with community leaders, CalOES, and FEMA to facilitate 3 cleanup events to remove limited quantities of debris from 55 private properties, all less than 0.5 acres (2,240 tons of material were removed). Private funds were used to repay the County for these facilitation efforts.



# Traffic Mitigation

Traffic Management Taskforce meets regularly to consider various methods for relieving congestion on affected roads throughout Montecito area.

- Taskforce includes representatives from California Highway Patrol (CHP), Caltrans, County Public Works Roads Division, County Sheriff's Office, [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), City of Santa Barbara, and Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG).
- Options include signs, routing, scheduling, traffic officers, and ongoing traffic studies.
- Taskforce has achieved several simple solutions that have already had an impact, and is working diligently to identify more.



# Communication

Conduct coordinated messaging to public and internal/external partners to aid in response and recovery efforts with following goals:

- Encourage all residents to sign up for [Aware & Prepare](#) so they may receive timely, official, and vital County information in an emergency or disaster;
- Clearly convey the likelihood of future storm events and associated risks;
- Ensure all evacuation orders are consistent, understood, and followed;
- Highlight progress toward recovery and comprehensive efforts, including work currently underway and what to expect in the future; and
- Ensure the Emergency Operations Team and Joint Information Center (JIC) are proactive, timely, consistent, and accurate.





# Storm Readiness

Most immediate issue is ensuring public safety by focusing on storm readiness, and preparing community for future debris flow incidents.

- Visit [readysbc.org](https://readysbc.org) for all things related to County disaster recovery and preparedness, including:
  - Current news
  - 10 steps residents can take to protect themselves now
  - Up to date map of debris flow risk areas
  - Up to date map of evacuation order boundaries
  - 72-hour evacuation timeline (with terms and definitions)
  - Links to other valuable information and resources



# Local Non-Profit Partnership

Community Long-Term Recovery Group (CLTRG) will connect residents to additional resources and services offered by local non-profit organizations, and provide case management services.

- 6 functional groups will focus on various unmet needs:
  - 1) Case management;
  - 2) Finance, public relations, fundraising, and in-kind services;
  - 3) Volunteer coordination;
  - 4) Construction coordination;
  - 5) Community wellness; and
  - 6) Community assessment.



# Community Engagement and Donations

- First District Supervisor initiated *Rebuilding Montecito* stakeholder process.
  - Develop a framework for encouraging and utilizing community input, fostering stakeholder engagement, and sharing ideas with community leaders.
- Montecito Center has been opened to serve as centralized location and key source of support, resources and information for affected residents, businesses, employees, and communities.
  - Public can access services, obtain up-to-date information, provide input, and engage in recovery and rebuilding process.
- County has partnered with *Partners for Resilient Communities* to assist with immediate and longer-term disaster resiliency efforts.
  - Non-profit has committed to donate funds to the County to assist with costs related to project management, community facilitation, and disaster expertise.



# Resiliency

Develop resiliency measures, including plans for strategic long-term recovery, and future fire and flood control mitigation.

- New study suggests lower thresholds for debris flows, which indicates that storms of lesser magnitude could still cause significant damage.
  - Highlights need for further mitigation in high flood risk areas, which have expanded beyond historical areas.
  - Potential strategies may include evaluating rebuilding along creek buffer zones, constructing deeper channels, adding additional catch basins, or adding capacity to current basins.
- County is working with an emergency management firm that helps clients prepare for and recover from disasters. Focus will be on strategic community planning, flood control mitigation, and floodplain management.



# Rebuild Process

- Planning and Development and Flood Control staff working to assist property owners.
- Rebuilding after a debris flow is significantly different than after a fire for multiple reasons:
  - Landforms have changed significantly.
  - Many survey monuments have been dislodged.
  - Flood maps (FIRM) no longer represent true on-the-ground conditions.
  - Area is subject to ongoing threats from debris flows for next 2-5 years.





# Rebuild Process (cont.)

- County is working to gather needed information (3 month timeframe).
- Working with FEMA on flood hazard and recovery mapping.
- Working with consultants on land surveys and engineering studies.



# Rebuild Process (cont.)

- Advising property owners not to make significant expenditures on design until studies are complete.
- If proceeding in advance of studies, County recommends meeting with Planning and Development case manager and Flood Control.
  - Staff will assist with determining submittal requirements (will vary based on individual property situations), which could include:
    - Topographic surveys
    - Property line surveys
    - Hydrologic Analysis of post burn conditions
  - Analysis and plans will likely require the use of experts.



# Recommended Actions

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file an update from the County Executive Office on the 1/9 Debris Flow community disaster recovery efforts;
- b) Receive an update from Planning and Development and Flood Control on the expected permitting and rebuild process in the areas affected by the debris flow;
- c) Provide further direction to staff as appropriate; and
- d) Determine that the above actions are not a project subject to CEQA review.

