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
Department No.:	012
For Agenda Of:	November 6, 2018
Placement:	Departmental
Estimated Time:	30 minutes
Continued Item:	No
If Yes, date from:	
Vote Required:	Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM:

Department Director(s)	Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer Bill Brown, Sheriff
Contact Info:	Terri Nisich, Assistant County Executive Officer Matt Pontes, Assistant County Executive Officer Robert Lewin, Director Office of Emergency Management Sol Linver, Undersheriff

SUBJECT: **Presentation on Emergency Alerting in Santa Barbara County**

County Counsel Concurrence	**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**
As to form: Yes	As to form: N/A
Other Concurrence: N/A	

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

a) Receive and file a presentation from County staff on emergency alerting in the Santa Barbara County Operational Area.

b) Determine that the proposed actions are administrative activities that do not involve commitment to any specific project, and are therefore not a project as defined by State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Sections 15378 (b)(5).

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda to provide the Board with an update regarding the current emergency alerting system, system limitations and challenges, information gathering, and recent enhancements to the system for Santa Barbara County Operational Area.

Background:

Alerting Systems

During a new emergency or a continuing emergency that is threatening communities, the County of Santa Barbara is ready to issue alerts to the public using multiple methods. This includes door-to-door notifications by officials, media news releases, social media, text messaging, email, radio, robo-calls to cell phone and home phones, as well as using Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Generally, the type of emergency is matched with the varied types of alerting strategies, recognizing that each method of alerting has limitations. Some of the alerting methods have character limitations, some require the public to sign up to receive alerts, and most methods require that people have either a cell phone or a home phone. By utilizing multiple alerting methods for emerging threats and disasters, the County increases its effectiveness in reaching our affected community members.

In January 2016, the County launched "Aware and Prepare" alerts utilizing the *Everbridge* software that the County first purchased using grant funding in 2015 and now continues to fund at a cost of $84,000 annually. In the last 12 months, over 350 "Aware and Prepare" alerts have been issued. Individuals must sign up at www.AwareAndPrepare.org to receive these alerts.

Individuals can also sign up for Nixle alerts that consist of only 138 characters. This anonymous system is simple to sign-up for, as one only needs to send a text message to 888777 with their zip code.

In the fall of 2016, the County was permitted by FEMA and capable of sending the new alerting method, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA). This Federal system, which currently has a 90-character limit for all messages, does not require a sign-up and will activate most cell phones through major cell phone providers that are part of the WEA system. A WEA will activate cell phones within a geographic area defined by Emergency Responders. Since WEA has been available, the County has issued 35 WEA alerts making Santa Barbara County the sixth highest user of WEA in the Country.

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) allows the County OEM to interrupt normal broadcasting with an emergency message alert over radio and television stations. The EAS system itself and County hardware and software have been upgraded over the last two years to ensure radio and television programmers all have compatible software. Recent tests of the EAS have been successful.

In the event that the County experiences a complete failure of the phone and internet system, the "Radio Ready" program infrastructure is available. This program allows for the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to contact local radio stations that have live broadcasting and back-up generator capabilities via satellite phones to convey emergency information to the public. This program's protocols and infrastructure has been upgraded this year.

The attached table (Attachment A) provides an at-a-glance overview of the various alerting methods currently available to the County.

Discussion

Continuous Improvements to the Alerting Systems

In response to Board questions and concerns regarding emergency alerting posed during the recent Holiday Fire incident, the County Executive Office convened Santa Barbara County Sheriff, Santa Barbara County Fire and the Office of Emergency Management, to evaluate protocols, systems and technologies to ensure that all aspects of alerting were thoroughly examined and enhancement made where necessary.

In addition to an internal review of protocol systems and technologies, the County launched an online survey focused on how to better alert community members in an event of an emergency. The survey, conducted in English and Spanish, captured over 4000 responses. The survey revealed the following issues:

- A lack of clarity about the Aware and Prepare alerting system and capabilities
- The public's desire to be notified of incidents in their general area, even if not directly impacted (i.e. evacuation or shelter in place order)

Regarding the Aware and Prepare alerting, during the Holiday Fire, over 100 people contacted the County and the City of Goleta with concerns that they were not alerted by Aware and Prepare alerts. The County reviewed each of the 100 concerns and determined that in all cases the people who did not receive the alert were either not registered to receive alerts or were outside of the identified evacuation zone/notification area. Nonetheless, as the recent survey indicated, even though concerned community members were not in the evacuation zone / notification area, they would have preferred to have been alerted to the nearby emergency.

Refined Protocols

Based on this internal examination of systems, as well as information gathered from the survey and questions and concerns posed by the public, the following actions and protocols have been implemented by the Santa Barbara County Sheriff Dispatch and Office of Emergency Management (OEM), in consultation with the Santa Barbara County Fire Department and public safety agencies in the Operational Area served by the Sheriff Dispatch alerts:

- **Initial notification for awareness of emergency via WEA (Sheriff Dispatch):** Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Dispatch in most cases is the initial issuer of notification for **immediate** threats. The Dispatch center operates 24/7, and dispatchers and dispatch supervisors are trained in issuing alerts. Once an emergency notification call by an authorized field officer (Sheriff or Fire) is called into the Dispatch Center that there is a potential threat, the Dispatch Center issues a simple WEA with a message that alerts the community that an **emergency is occurring in the general area**. An example of this WEA message:
  Wildland fire in area of XXX stay alert and take necessary actions to stay safe.

- **Notification for evacuation, if necessary, via WEA (Sheriff Dispatch):** After the initial WEA alert for awareness, as more information is available, a second WEA **notifying the area requiring action** such as shelter in place or evacuation order may be issued. An exception to

this process is that if an incident is unfolding rapidly, **there may be the immediate need to send out an evacuation or shelter in place alert to a directly impacted area**. In this instance, a notification to the surrounding area may also be sent to heighten community awareness.

- **Further alert notifications will be issued using all other Aware and Prepare alert methods (Sheriff Dispatch or OEM):** The Santa Barbara County Sheriffs' Office Dispatch will send initial WEAs and if necessary, Aware and Prepare alerts, until responsibility for alerting is formally transitioned to the Office of Emergency Management. OEM, through any of the methods described above, may send further notifications and alerts (via email, text or phone) or if there is a need, again via WEA until the incident information is transmitted.

As noted above, individuals must be signed up to receive Aware and Prepare and Nixle emergency alerts. Individuals not signed up will not receive an alert from Aware and Prepare alert or Nixle.

Education and Outreach:

To ensure the community is aware of emergency alerting/notification capabilities as well emergency preparedness, the following education and outreach actions will occur:
- Work in conjunction with key stakeholders, to increase Aware and Prepare alerting registrations and understanding of system.
- Provide enhanced information to the public regarding all emergency alerting/notification methods, terminology regarding evacuations as well as the need for personal responsibility and preparedness. In order to prepare for storm season, initial community outreach and education meetings were held in Montecito and Carpinteria on October 25 and October 29 respectively
- Ensure that communications are provided in English and Spanish including.
- On September 21, 2018, the Governor signed SB821, authored by Senator Jackson. This Bill authorizes each county to enter into an agreement to access the contact information of resident accountholders through the records of a public utility or other agency responsible for water service, waste and recycling services, or other property-related services for the sole purpose of enrolling county residents in a county-operated public emergency warning system. The bill also requires any county that enters into such an agreement to include procedures to enable any resident to opt out of the warning system and a process to terminate the receiving agency's access to the resident's contact information. The bill would also prohibit the use of the information gathered for any purpose other than for emergency notification. County OEM is working with the Everbridge alerting system software provider, local utilities and agencies to secure contact information.
- During the Thomas Fire, 1/9 Debris Flow and more recent events, the County provided information in English and Spanish across various platforms including the ReadySBC.org Website, CSBTV, 211 Information Line, a dedicated call center, community meetings, as well as traditional and social media. AB 1877, authored by Assembly member Limon and signed by the Governor on September 21, 2018, requires the State Office of Emergency Services (OES) to create a library of translated emergency notifications and a translation style guide, and would require designated alerting agencies to use the guide when issuing emergency notifications to the public. In addition, the bill authorizes the office to require a city, county, or city and county to translate emergency notifications as a condition of approving its application to receive any voluntary grant funds with a nexus to emergency management performance. The County is

> currently working to ensure translation of all communications and will work closely with OES to continue to enhance Spanish language emergency alerting once the translation guide is complete.

Future Considerations:

In addition to an internal review of the County alerting system, there are also university studies in progress regarding the broader issue of emergency alerting and evacuation behaviors nationwide. Ideally, information derived from these studies will create a broader understanding of the best methods to effectively alert and communicate with the public during an emergency. The County will continue to participate in these studies and enhance protocols and systems as needed.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: No

Fiscal Analysis:

Narrative:
There are no fiscal impacts associated with these presentations.

Special Instructions:

No special instructions

Attachments:

Attachment A – Alerting chart
Attachment B - PowerPoint

Authored by:

Robert Lewin, (805) 681-5526