An aerial photograph of the San Diego city skyline, featuring numerous high-rise buildings and a multi-lane highway in the foreground. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent red overlay.

# **County of San Diego Severe Storm and Flooding (DR-4758-CA) After Action Report and Improvement Plan**

County of San Diego Government

November 8, 2024

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# Handling Instructions

This document was developed by Hagerty Consulting, Inc. (Hagerty) to support the County of San Diego (County) with identifying lessons learned and opportunities for improvement in response to the 2024 Severe Storm and Flooding Response and Recovery. The analysis outlined in this report represents identified best practices and suggested areas for improvement. It is consistent with guidelines established by the federal Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program.

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**Disclaimer:** This report is a subsequent review, consistent with California Evidence Code, section 1151. As such, actions identified in this report are inadmissible in any subsequent legal action or proceeding to address conduct in connection with the event.

# Acknowledgments

The County sees an after-action analysis as critical to the ongoing improvement in the ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. This report is informed by detailed feedback from County personnel and external stakeholders involved in the response to and recovery from the Winter 2024 Severe Storm and Flooding (DR-4758-CA). In this report, the County aimed to encapsulate the diverse voices that played vital roles in this disaster's responses and recovery efforts. By including perspectives from individuals, communities, and organizations involved at every level, the County sought to ensure that the full spectrum of experiences, challenges, and successes was accurately reflected in this report. This holistic approach highlights the collaborative nature of the response and recovery process and emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders. To ensure that all voices were captured, there are some seemingly contradicting perspectives included in the document. All perspectives and experiences are valuable and provide opportunities for identifying strengths and areas of improvement. The County is grateful for the time and input of those who participated in this important review process. The County would also like to thank the community members, public safety professionals, emergency management personnel, and volunteers who supported the Winter 2024 Severe Storm and Flooding (DR-4758-CA) response and recovery efforts.

# Executive Summary

This After-Action Report (AAR) documents observations by County stakeholders concerning the County's response to and recovery from the 2024 Severe Storm and Flooding, spanning from January 2024 to June 2024. The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement within the County's response and recovery. These observations are based on information collected through various stakeholder interviews, surveys, and document reviews. They intend to provide a detailed, objective analysis to garner its strengths and implement recommendations to improve the County's emergency response and recovery operations.

The County of San Diego Severe Storm and Flooding (DR-4758-CA) AAR and Improvement Plan (IP) is organized into the sections enumerated below:

1. **Executive Summary:** Provides an overview of the after-action review, including a summary of events, event timeline, and review methodology.
2. **Introduction:** Provides a detailed overview of the event response and recovery timeline, including activated task forces and recovery groups.
3. **Report Development Methodology:** Provides an overview of the review methodology used by the report development team.
4. **Results and Assessment:** Analyzes six evaluation areas critical to the County of San Diego's Severe Storm and Flooding response and recovery operations. Each area includes an overview of the events with strengths and recommendations identified in the respective focus areas. The following focus areas are analyzed in this report: Response Strategy, including Operational Area Emergency Operations Center (OAEOC), Operational Area Coordination, Community Engagement, Emergency Temporary Lodging (ETL); Public Information Management; and Data Management and Reporting.
5. **Improvement Plan:** Provides a consolidated list of recommendations along with responsible agencies/organizations. Implementation timelines will be established for each recommendation.
6. **Appendices:** Acronyms Index, Glossary of Common Terminology, Documents
  - » County Of San Diego, Chief Administrative Office, Strengthening Our Regional Capabilities In The Four Phases Of Emergency Management Report Back
  - » County Of San Diego, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Strengthening Our Regional Capabilities In The Four Phases Of Emergency Management Report Back Analysis,
  - » Board Of Supervisors Minute Order No. 22. Community Response And Recovery: Strengthening Our Regional Capabilities In The Four Phases Of Emergency Management



## Event Timeline

The response to and recovery from the Severe Storm and Flooding was unprecedented in scope compared to a typical weather-related incident across the region. This report intends to capture notable elements and events that drove the success of the County's response and recovery. The timeline started on January 22, 2024, when the region experienced a storm resulting in severe flooding in neighborhoods throughout the county and unincorporated areas of the county, but most intensely in the Southeast Planning Area (i.e., Sherman Heights, Logan Heights, Grant Hill, Memorial, Stockton, Mount Home, Mountain View, Southcrest, and Shelltown). On January 22, 2024, the County of San Diego activated its OAEOC at Level Three (lowest level monitoring phase), and local states of emergency were proclaimed by the City of San Diego and the County. The OAEOC served as a central location for coordinating emergency response and recovery operations. On January 23, 2024, California declared a State of Emergency for the County. As concerns grew, the County adjusted its posture and elevated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to a Level Two. On February 2, 2024, Governor Newsom proclaimed a State of Emergency for eight counties in Southern California in advance of incoming storms, including the County of San Diego. On February 7, 2024, Governor Newsom requested a Major Disaster Declaration from President Biden for Individual Assistance (IA), not including Public Assistance (PA). Over the next month, the County worked with different levels of government and organizations to assist eligible individuals, including housing, vehicle replacement, food aid, counseling, medical services, and legal services. On February 8, 2024, the OAEOC was then scaled back to Level Three to monitor reports of flooding and possible debris flow in response to the storm. On April 2, 2024, the City of San Diego deactivated its EOC. The City of San Diego Office of Emergency Services and the County of San Diego OAEOC continued to support recovery operations and partner agencies during normal business hours. Throughout this timeline, stakeholders identified the County's strengths, areas of improvement, and recommendations. This information was collected through document review, interviews, and planning team meetings to ensure a thorough analysis.

*Figure 1: Flooding in City of San Diego Streets*



## Methodology

Interviews were conducted with task force leaders, community-based organizations (CBOs), and County staff to gather insight into the operational effectiveness, resource coordination, and areas for improvement related to the response and recovery efforts. Data collected from incident documentation and stakeholders was organized into focus areas and analyzed to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement within the County's response and recovery strategies. This information was translated into actionable steps to enhance future operations. These findings of this analysis are identified and detailed in the report's Improvement Plan.

## Results and Assessment

Findings from the Response Strategy focus areas were identified through sub-focus areas including the OAEOC, Operational Area Coordination, Community Engagement, and the ETL program.

The County, its stakeholders, and community members were highly appreciated for their emergency response. Data collected for this report acknowledges the County's efforts to respond to community needs, regardless of jurisdiction. Drawing from lessons learned in historical experiences with various natural disasters, the County successfully established an Incident Command System (ICS) and decision-making structures early in the response.

Findings from the OAEOC and Operational Area Coordination analysis revealed significant strengths that can be carried forward for future operations, as well as areas for improvement to enhance response and recovery efforts. Notable strengths include effective coordination and communication, collaborative professionalism, innovative approaches, and rapid implementation of operational strategies. Recommendations for future improvements include reinforcing OAEOC leadership and decision-making capabilities, optimizing OAEOC efficiency through space management and training, streamlining decision-making processes, enhancing transparency, and ensuring consistent leadership with real-time data management.

Community engagement played a crucial role in this process, with a strong reliance on CBOs to provide immediate and ongoing assistance to flood survivors. The analysis identified strengths such as enhanced resource distribution and effective communication channels for community members to coordinate with impacted residents and report on issues related to lodging or feeding. Future recommendations include addressing technology barriers to accessing resources, establishing emergency response Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), pre-incident planning and training, and enhancing transparency with organizations and the community.

The final focus area of the Response Strategy analysis reviewed the ETL program, which introduced an innovative approach to non-congregate sheltering. The program's strengths included effective sheltering and food provisions and consistent liaison support. However, recommendations for future implementation include better planning, resource allocation,



improved communication strategies, and secured funding. The outcomes of this program will influence the County's decision to continue this approach in future events.

The AAR also highlighted the importance of public information and data management and reporting. Key strengths in these areas include innovative data-tracking platforms, flexible translation services, logistical and operational efficiency, and a robust mass notification system.

The report underscores the County's ability to integrate innovative alternatives into emergency management, design transition plans to address housing needs, apply lessons learned from previous operations, and ensure that all impacted community members received the necessary support.

This AAR details the timeline of events and the findings identified, emphasizing the County's leadership in serving both its residents and neighboring jurisdictions. The recognition of these efforts is evident in the data collected from stakeholders following the disaster.

## Recommendations

This AAR presents recommendations to the County, and provides actionable guidance on how to memorialize best practices demonstrated in its Severe Storm and Flood response and recovery and shore up areas for improvement. Hagerty designed recommendations to align with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) all-hazards approach to emergency management based on its National Preparedness Guidelines<sup>1</sup>. Recommendations focus on implementing lessons learned from the 2024 Severe Storm and Flooding (DR-4758-CA) response and recovery into the County's pre-incident planning, training, and exercise efforts. A complete list of recommendations presented throughout the document can be found in the [Improvement Plan](#) of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> "National Preparedness Guidelines." U.S. Department of Homeland Security. September 2007. [fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/National\\_Preparedness\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/National_Preparedness_Guidelines.pdf)

# Introduction

## Summary of Events

### Background

On January 22, 2024, the County experienced the heaviest rainfall in a single day in more than one hundred years. Upon the rain subsiding, residents within the County who had been historically underserved were left with significant damage caused by widespread flooding, further exacerbating the needs of the communities. On February 19, 2024, the Biden Administration announced a Major Disaster Declaration for San Diego to aid those impacted by the unprecedented flooding.

The County continued to monitor the extreme weather patterns as regions faced a new era of disasters. The County worked with its jurisdictions, the State, and the federal government to provide residents with short-term, mid-term, and long-term assistance and continued to prepare for future events.

*Figure 2: First Responders Rescue Trapped Flood Survivors*



### Activation

The County OAEOC was activated at Level Three on January 22, 2024, when multiple communities and highways experienced flooding. Within an hour, the City of San Diego and the County declared local emergencies. The County worked with CBOs, and San Diego Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (SD VOADs) such as the American Red Cross (ARC) to open congregate sheltering and food distribution areas.

On January 23, 2024, County staff started to conduct damage assessments, both in the field and remotely, by using Crisis Track, a newly implemented tool to engage the public to begin collecting self-reported damages. During this time, the 2-1-1 emergency contract hotline was activated, opening a resource for flood survivors to find assistance for food, housing, healthcare, and other basic needs. Additionally, Governor Newsom proclaimed a State of Emergency for the County of San Diego.

On January 24, 2024, the County OAEOC was activated at Level Two after receiving over 1,500 damage survey resources throughout the region. In less than a week, self-reported damage responses rose to over 4,000.

Governor Newsom proclaimed a State of Emergency for eight counties in Southern California on February 4, 2024, in advance of incoming storms. This proclamation included provisions that authorized a California National Guard response, if tasked, facilitating unemployment benefits for impacted residents, and making it easier for out-of-state contractors and utilities to repair storm damage. The National Weather Services issued a flood watch for San Diego on February 5, 2024,

due to incoming storms, potentially leading to considerable impacts.

*Figure 3: Excessive Flooding in the County of San Diego*



On February 7, 2024, Governor Newsom requested a Major Disaster Declaration from President Biden for FEMA IA to assist eligible individuals, including housing, vehicle replacement, food aid, counseling, medical, and legal services, which was approved on February 19, 2024. The OAEOC was then reduced to Level Three on February 8, 2024.

The County OAEOC transitioned to Staff Duty Officer status on February 11, 2024, and resumed recovery operations activities on February 12, 2024. At this point, FEMA, and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) verified \$30.8M in public damages. On April 2, 2024, the City of San Diego deactivated its EOC. The City of San Diego Office of Emergency Services and the County OAEOC continued to support recovery operations and partner agencies during normal business hours.

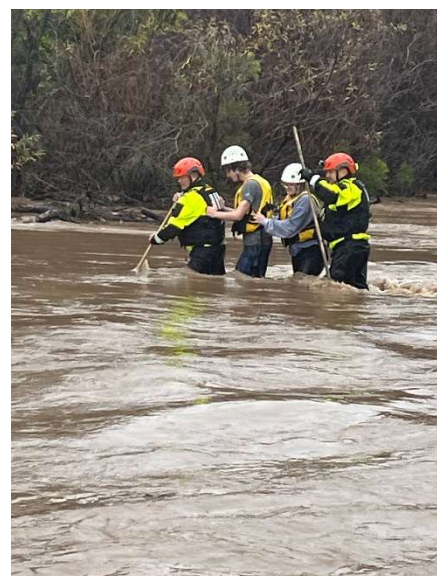
## Response

The County immediately began its response with County departments working alongside the City of San Diego and CBOs to provide flood survivors shelter, food, and support. Throughout the response, the County provided guidance and support to the City of San Diego. For example, the County worked with the City of San Diego to open its own Local Assistance Center (LAC) points of contact for organizations to be present.

### FINANCIAL RELIEF

On January 30, 2024, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors approved \$10M in funds to provide relief to flood survivors. These funds were designated for short-term, non-

*Figure 4: Emergency Responders Rescue Flood Survivors*



congregate lodging for displaced residents, which ultimately led to the development of the ETL program.

## **NON-CONGREGATE SHELTERING**

During the response efforts, the County held daily coordination meetings regarding lodging for impacted residents with the City of San Diego and the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) leadership. Meetings were designed to help facilitate the transition of roughly 700 City of San Diego households from congregate emergency sheltering to the new County ETL program. This program was created largely due to urging from CBOs for the County to take over the lodging programs they had begun individually. On February 12, 2024, the County officially launched the ETL program and used existing County funds dedicated to non-congregate sheltering for the flood survivors. On March 5, 2024, the County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to extend the ETL program from March 25 to May 11 and provided an additional \$6.6M for funding.

On March 13, 2024, the County led an ETL Transition Kickoff Meeting to discuss a plan for clients currently enrolled in the ETL Program and who may have received FEMA assistance. The County and City of San Diego collaborated to develop a Transition Determine Group (TDG) charter to conduct routine case conferencing where individual cases in the ETL program were reviewed and other key factors were considered. The City of San Diego and SDHC continued to meet to refine further the process and procedures of referring households from the County ETL program to the City of San Diego via SDHC.

## **DEACTIVATION**

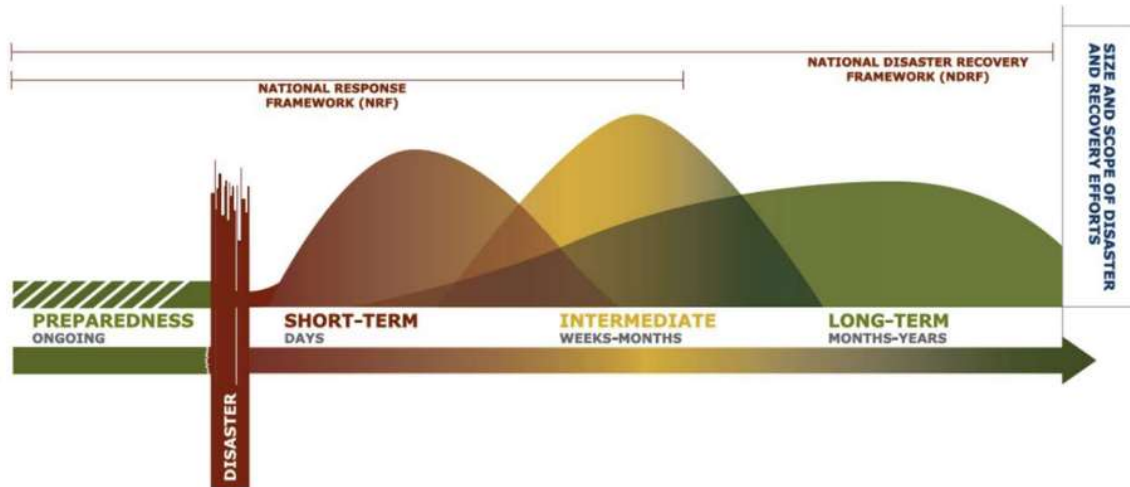
The City of San Diego then deactivated its EOC on April 2, 2024, and the City and County formally transitioned to recovery operations.

## **Recovery**

On February 12, 2024, the City of San Diego transitioned its LAC resources and services to an online resource hub. On this day, the County officially launched the ETL Program and transitioned to an Operational Area Recovery Operations Center (OAROC). However, it is important to note that the recovery process was a sequence of interdependent and concurrent events that moved the community toward its planned recovery outcomes. Therefore, all aspects of a disaster were interconnected and ranged from pre-incident to long-term recovery activities, as depicted in the figure below. The County worked immediately to initiate short-term recovery operations days after the initial disaster. According to the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF), the Recovery Continuum highlights the reality that, for a community faced with significant and widespread disaster impacts, preparedness, response, response, and recovery are not and cannot be

separate and sequential efforts. All phases play important roles in the community's ability to move forward. (NDRF, 2016, p. 5)<sup>2</sup>

Figure 5: National Disaster Recovery Framework Timeline (NDRF, 2016)



## ETL PROGRAM

During the initial response and recovery, the County activated its contract with Equus to provide in-person services and support to hundreds of impacted households and multiple local area hotels. This was the first time any California county implemented a large-scale ETL program over an extended period. Since the program's activation, County staff worked with community volunteers to connect with affected households to confirm they had been provided vouchers to extend their lodging. Additionally, County staff monitored the services and conditions of the hotels and communicated their observations and concerns to County leadership and Equus for resolutions.

<sup>2</sup> "National Disaster Recovery Framework" U.S. Department of Homeland Security. June 2016  
[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/national\\_disaster\\_recovery\\_framework\\_2nd.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/national_disaster_recovery_framework_2nd.pdf)



## DEBRIS REMOVAL

Throughout February, the County collaborated with contractors and the Department of Public Works to coordinate debris management services for the unincorporated communities. Teams comprised of county inspectors, project managers, and the contractor, Hazard Construction, monitored the debris removal efforts. The County reported over 2,059 cubic yards of material and over 25,131 pounds of household hazardous waste that needed removal.

*Figure 6: Residents Work to Assess Damage from Flooding*



## FUNDING

On February 19, 2024, President Biden approved a Major Disaster Declaration to support individuals and families impacted by the flooding. This made federal funding available to supplement the state and local efforts within the County. FEMA had approved over \$25M for housing and other needs and over \$45M for Small Business Association (SBA) loans in the County. The State Supplemental Grant Program (SSGP) approved funding for 23 flood survivors, with a cumulative total amount of \$170,187.54. The County of San Diego Operational Area was also approved for funding through the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA). Cal OES would then reimburse government applicants for 75% of their eligible costs and repair work related to the storm. Additionally, the San Diego Foundation raised over \$1.3M for the San Diego Flood Response Fund, with more than 1,100 individuals, businesses, and organizations contributing.

## FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

The County worked alongside FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) teams to visit the most impacted communities and provide in-person information, and to help affected residents register for FEMA assistance. The County and FEMA also worked together to establish locations to support Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC) where FEMA specialists could help survivors with applications, questions, guidance about eligibility, and other financial questions.

## TASK FORCES AND RECOVERY GROUPS

At the beginning of March, the County organized Task Forces and groups including the Policy Group, Public Information Task Force, Community Engagement Task Force, ETL Task Force, Mental Health Task Force, and Feeding Task Force, to respond to key recovery activities. The County utilized Disaster Service Workers (DSWs) who were integral in staffing the Task Forces and Recovery Groups.

## Policy Group

The Policy Group was comprised of leadership from various departments that helped to create policies, procedures, and plans for the different emerging recovery areas. Policy decisions influenced the actions of task force groups, ranging from lodging to feeding and community engagement.

*Figure 7: Updates Were Presented On Various Platforms*

## Public Information

The Joint Information Center (JIC) was activated to share recovery messaging with local, state, and federal agencies. It shared communication with the community through fliers, social media platforms, and other means, to provide awareness of available resources (e.g., food services, crisis counseling, clean-up, mold



remediation, personal item replacement, and case management) for those impacted. Fliers were written in English and Spanish and were distributed to DRCs and clients within the ETL program. JIC staff also worked to address media inquiries and update the website with key information and fundraising opportunities. The Public Information and Community Engagement Task Forces were utilized to inform and answer questions about residents' concerns, especially regarding food and ETL inquiries.

## Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Task Force was tasked with maintaining a relationship with the community and CBOs by offering resources, in-person support (e.g., community meetings), and via a call center. The County also worked alongside SD VOAD to build partnerships with non-profits and to expand capabilities to assist with food needs.

## ETL Task Force

The ETL Task Force supported the efforts of the ETL program by working to find alternatives to congregate sheltering. By using hotel contracts, the ETL program was able to provide temporary lodging for over 872 households, utilizing more than 80 hotels. This Task Force also worked alongside Equus and the SDHC to ensure residents could return to their pre-incident status. As of August 9th, 2024, the ETL program matched 755 out of 872 households placed in the County ETL program with FEMA Registrations, of which nearly 435 received FEMA assistance.

## Mental Health

As the recovery process extended, the County used its Behavioral Health Services (BHS) Department and contracts to provide mental health providers and services to flood survivors through group therapy, individual counseling, and case management support.

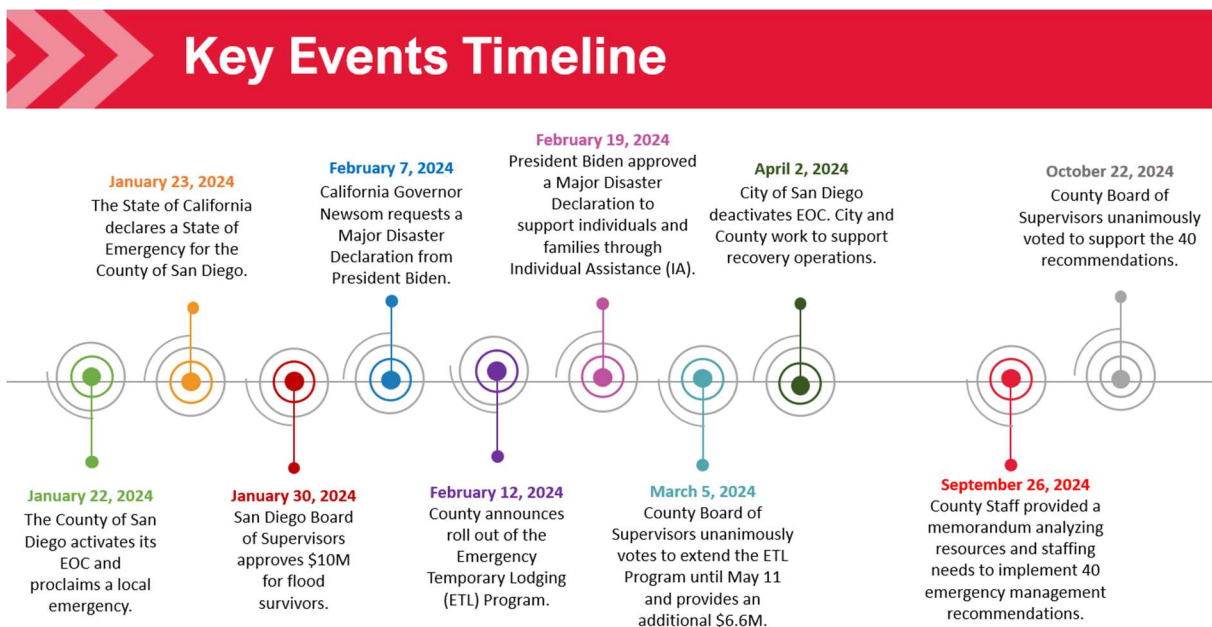
## Feeding

The County worked with CBOs to provide food to flood survivors, especially those in the ETL program. Disaster Cal Fresh was also utilized, which offered food to existing households impacted by the flooding. The County eventually contracted with Uber to implement the Uber Eats Voucher Program as an alternative feeding mechanism.

## DEMOBILIZATION

On June 21, 2024, the County EOC demobilized and returned to San Diego Office of Emergency Services (OES) Staff Duty Officer Status.

Figure 8: Key Events Timeline



## Event Timeline

The Severe Storm and Flood Response included the implementation of unprecedented response and recovery operations to support the community. The following is an in-depth timeline of key events.

### 2024 JANUARY

#### » January 22 – 1300 hours

- The region experienced a storm that resulted in serious flooding in neighborhoods throughout the City of San Diego and the County, but most intensely in the Southeastern Planning Area.
- The County OAEOC was activated to a Level 3. The County OAROC was also activated to begin initial recovery operations.
- The City of San Diego EOC activated to a Level 2.
- ARC shelters opened at Lincoln High School, Bostonia Recreation Center, and Coronado Recreation Center with a canteen team and feeding plan for dinner.
- The Humane Society arrived on site with a co-located animal shelter.
- Seven local schools announced early dismissals or closures.
- Lemon Grove substation was evacuated.
- Road closures, due to flooding, were reported in Spring Valley, Escondido (Country Club Drive), and Fallbrook (Sandia Creek Road).

#### » January 22 – 2200 hours

- The County EOC proclaimed a local emergency.
- The City of San Diego EOC deactivated at 2000 hours and proclaimed a local emergency.
- The City of El Cajon EOC activated at Level 3 and monitored the situation.
- The JIC posted an update to the AlertSanDiego website, informing the public of the ARC opening overnight shelters and retweeted information to their Twitter account.

#### » January 23 – 1100 hours

- The City of San Diego EOC was activated to a Level 2 (0800-1630 hrs.) and proclaimed an emergency.
- The City of Coronado proclaimed a local emergency.
- The San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) discussed damages to schools.
- The County requested that the City of San Diego OES provide the its initial damage estimates to support a CDAA or a Major Disaster Declaration.
- The County EOC sent staff to the City of San Diego's EOC.
- County staff were sent out into the field to conduct damage assessments.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requested a federal cleanup for oil due to flooding in the City of San Diego.
- The Recovery Branch of the EOC shared the Crisis Track survey with the public to collect self-reported damages.

- The JIC assisted the Recovery Branch by developing a flyer in both English and Spanish to share information on the Crisis Track survey. This was developed and shared in partnership with both the Partner Relay Team and Network.

» **January 23 – 1900 hours**

- The State of California proclaimed a State of Emergency for the County of San Diego.
- The 2-1-1 emergency hotline contract was activated, and an agency rep was present in the County EOC.

» Patriot Cleanup Contractors were given a tour of the impacted area. Cleanup was expected to take 7-10 days and consisted of mostly surface streets and business waste.

- County OES held a meeting with SD VOAD to discuss potential recovery assistance.
- The JIC, along with Information Technology (IT) staff, added the capability for the Crisis Track survey to be available in eight threshold languages.

» **January 24**

- The County of San Diego EOC was activated to a Level 2 (0800-1830 hrs.)
- San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) EOC was activated to a Level 3 (0800-1800).
- The City of El Cajon EOC was deactivated (0800).
- The United States EPA arrived as the Federal On-Scene Coordinator for the oil spill incident.
- A Storm Recovery Team met at the EOC to discuss debris removal, environmental health, LAC support, and housing strategies.

» **January 25**

- The County held a Storm Recovery Update press briefing.

» **January 26**

- Schools began to reopen.
- The National City Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) was activated to assist with sandbag and other distribution operations.

» **January 27**

- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) crews assisted with debris removal groups in the community and filled and delivered sandbags in conjunction with the San Miguel Fire District.
- The Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ) Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) issued two emergency waivers for: 1) Solid Waste Facility Permits for Fallbrook Recycling and Transfer and Otay Landfill to increase tonnage they can receive; and 2) Emergency Transfer/Processing for County of San Diego Public Works Disaster Debris Staging Area to allow for emergency transfer and processing operations.
- San Diego County Fire's CERT was activated to support the City of San Diego CERT with donations management.

» **January 28**

- The County's Spring Valley LAC opened.



- DEHQ DOC Geographic Information Systems (GIS) developed up-to-date mapping, showing self-reported residential and permitted facility damage. Overlays were created to show permitted DEHQ facilities in the affected areas versus facilities that self-reported damage. An underserved community boundary overlay was created for the use with the self-reported residential damage. Overlays assisted DEHQ in identifying facilities and permitted housing within flood-impacted areas.

» **January 29**

- The Health Branch of the EOC held a call with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Public Health Preparedness and Response (PHPR), DEHQ, and City of San Diego representatives to discuss resources available for a Joint Hazard Assessment Team (JHAT) request.
- A non-congregate shelter contract was activated to provide lodging for Access and Functional Needs (AFN) clients with medical conditions.
- SDG&E activated emergency protections to help residential and business customers in the service area who was impacted by the storm.
- The Recovery Branch supplied customized maps and self-reported storm damage data to the jurisdictions to aid in their storm recovery operations.

» **January 30**

- The San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved \$10M to provide relief to flood survivors. Funding included providing short-term, non-congregate lodging for displaced residents. The County Board of Supervisors also approved a series of actions aimed at boosting regionwide response and recovery efforts related to the January storms and directed the Interim CAO to assess and report back when more can be done to strengthen regional emergency management capabilities.
- Three casualties were confirmed to have been caused by the flooding.
- County and City of San Diego Officials met with the Cal OES Director to identify the process for requesting resources.
- DEHQ and the Department of Public Works assisted with debris removal in unincorporated areas.
- The City of National City proclaimed a local emergency.

» **January 31**

- The County held a press conference thanking the community on its Day of Service and reminded the public to take precautions ahead of inclement weather.
- The County initiated deliberate planning and coordination to develop the County ETL program to provide ETL for flood survivors who were displaced from their residents.
- National City EOC was activated ahead of the second storm.
- The County LAC closed operations as of 1900 hours due to incoming inclement weather.
- City of San Diego CERT activated to assist with donations management.
- DEHQ sent guidance and education to City Managers and Emergency Managers in the region to ensure proper segregation and management of household hazardous waste at collection sites throughout the County.

- The City of San Diego issued an AlertSanDiego campaign and a Wireless Emergency Alert for Pre-Storm Evacuation Warning to residents in flood-prone areas.

## **FEBRUARY**

### **» February 1**

- National City EOC was deactivated after the second storm.
- The cities of La Mesa, Lemon Grove, San Marcos, and El Cajon activated their EOC to a Level Three; the Cities of Coronado and National City activated their EOC to a Level Two.
- The County sent a letter to the City of San Diego Chief Operating Officer (COO) regarding the process for setting up a LAC and provided City OES guidance on the setup and operation of their own LAC, including points of contact for organizations to be present.
- Daily coordination meetings began to occur between the City of San Diego and SDHC leadership and staff regarding lodging of impacted residents through March 19.
- The City of Chula Vista CERT was activated to assist with sandbag operations.

### **» February 2**

- The cities of La Mesa, Lemon Grove, San Marcos, El Cajon, Coronado, and National City deactivated their EOC.
- The FEMA, Cal OES, U.S. SBA, and County Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment concluded.

### **» February 3**

- The County provided the City of San Diego OES with written guidance on areas of improvement after day one of the City's LAC.
- The City of San Diego LAC opened at the Mountain View Community Center. County staff were present to support.
- The County EOC connected County Public Information Officers (PIOs) with volunteer agencies to amplify volunteer efforts for cleanup efforts for flood survivors.

### **» February 4**

- Governor Newsom proclaimed a State of Emergency for eight counties, including San Diego. The Emergency Proclamation included the authorization of the California National Guard response if tasked.

### **» February 7**

- Governor Newsom requested a Major Disaster Declaration from President Biden for FEMA IA.

### **» February 10**

- The County ROC coordinated with the City of San Diego to link the [SanDiego.gov/Recovery](https://SanDiego.gov/Recovery) webpage to the [AlertSanDiego.org](https://AlertSanDiego.org) webpage.

- DEHQ staff assisted four households at the City of San Diego's LAC, providing disaster survivors with information on food and water safety, vector control, and housing health and safety, including considerations for mold prevention.
- The County EOC Operations Section initiated the ETL program soft launch with 60 eligible referrals sent to Equus for enrollment into temporary emergency lodging.
- Volunteer organizations (i.e., All Hands and Hearts, California Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, Disaster Aid USA, San Diego South Stake – Church of Latter-Day Saints, Team Rubicon USA, and United Methodist Committee on Relief-California [UMCOR] Pacific Conference) participated in the Crisis Clean-up.

» **February 11**

- The County EOC transitioned to Staff Duty Officer status.
- The City of San Diego's LAC closed at 1400 hours. The final day of intake added 89 new forms for total of 1068. Most services were transitioned to an online resource hub at [SanDiego.gov/Recovery](https://SanDiego.gov/Recovery).

» **February 12**

- The County launched the ETL Program.
- The City of San Diego's LAC transitioned all resources and services to an online resource hub: [sandiego.gov/recovery](https://sandiego.gov/recovery).
- The County transitioned to an OAROC at 0800 hours.

» **February 13**

- A \$950,000+ donation was received from the San Diego Flood Response Fund.

» **February 14**

- SDHC anticipated a hotel check-out date for households on February 22, and the remainder at the end of the month.
- The County set up a public email inbox at [JanuaryStormQuestions@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:JanuaryStormQuestions@sdcounty.ca.gov) to answer any questions related to the January 22 storm.

» **February 15**

- The County OAROC was activated at Level Three.

» **February 16**

- SDHC Commission reported completing intake forms for submission to the County.

» **February 17**

- County staff worked with Equus staff to provide in-person services and support to hundreds of impacted households at multiple local area hotels.
- Community Partner coordination and support include the 2-1-1 emergency hotline, Access, All Hands and Hearts, Alpha Project, Equus, Property Management, ARC, Salvation Army, San Diego Volunteer Organization Disaster, SBCS/National City, SDCOE, San Diego Housing Commission, Team Rubicon, and the Jackie Robinson Family YMCA (YMCA) Southeast Disaster Response Team.

» **February 19**

- FEMA IA related to the January 22 storm was approved for the County.

**» February 20**

- President Biden approved a Major Disaster Declaration to support individuals and families impacted by the late January storms in the County (FEMA IA). The declaration made federal funding available to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the areas of the County impacted by the storm. Assistance included grants for temporary housing and home repairs, SBA low-interest loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the storm.

**» February 21**

- The JIC held daily coordination meetings with PIOs from Cal OES, FEMA, SBA, and the City of San Diego.
- The County and the cities of San Diego and National City worked with FEMA to identify and finalize suitable locations to support DRCs.
- Transition of households previously receiving services through the YMCA was completed.
- Intake forms for the SDCOE and associated school districts were completed.

**» February 22**

- Two FEMA DSA teams deployed to the most impacted communities to provide in-person information and help affected residents register for FEMA assistance.
- The County and the cities of San Diego and National City worked with FEMA to identify suitable locations to support DRCs. FEMA conducted site inspections of the proposed DRC locations.

**» SD VOAD signed a lease with the County to store Crisis Cleanup supplies at the Southeast Family Resource Center.**

- Global Empowerment Mission delivered Crisis Cleanup supplies to the Southeast Family Resource Center. The delivered items include immediate care kits, family necessity kits, and necessity kits for pets.
- A message was sent by AlertSanDiego to 4,400 contacts notifying them of available FEMA assistance for individuals and families.
- A Joint Information System (JIS) group was created to share recovery messaging with local, state, and federal agencies.

**» February 23**

- The County OA was approved for CDAA funding for the January 22 storm. Cal OES reimbursed government applicants for 75% of their eligible costs and repair work related to the incident.
- Two FEMA DSA teams deployed to the Spring Valley/La Presa communities to provide in-person information and help affected residents register for FEMA assistance.
- The 2-1-1 emergency hotline stopped taking new applications.

**» February 26**

- The SBA opened a Business Recovery Center (BRC) at Southwestern College's Center for Business Advancement in National City.

- The 2-1-1 emergency hotline contract concluded as call volumes returned to normal operations.

» **February 27**

- Onsite County staffing for the Ramada Inn in National City concluded as service/resource opportunities shifted to the two FEMA DRCs and the SBA BRC.
- Three FEMA DSA Teams deployed to the Nestor, Broadway Heights, Leucadia, El Cajon, Hillsdale, Bostonia, Crest, and Jamul communities, and provided in-person information to help affected residents register for FEMA Assistance.

» **February 28**

- The Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) provided 53 staff contributing 348 staff hours. Flood response efforts included: 17 events; 529 persons served; and 909 resources distributed.

» **February 29**

- Biweekly calls began to discuss IA with FEMA, CalOES, and the City of San Diego.
- Priority was made to transition the 38 households lodged at the Ramada Inn Midway Quality Inn Naval Base.
- The County ETL program and associated lodging was extended to March 25th to align with existing County funding dedicated to non-congregate sheltering for flood survivors.
- The San Diego Foundation raised \$1,353,000 for the San Diego Flood Response Fund, which included a second earned match of more than \$215,000 from the San Diego Foundation Board of Governors.
- The HSEC staff teamed up with Equus to provide in-person services and support to those remaining households who needed to transition from temporary lodging arrangements provided by community partners into the County program. Sites included the Ramada Inn Midway and the Quality Inn Naval Base.

**MARCH**

» **March 1**

- The SDCOE provided a list of hotels where school-aged children were being lodged to transportation needs coordination for the school districts and to prevent absenteeism.
- Two DRCs, jointly operated by Cal OES and FEMA, opened at the Spring Valley Library and the Mountain View Community Center.
- From March 1-3 the County provided a total of eight DSWs (bi-lingual English/Spanish) per day to help support field operations/program enrollments with Equus. HSEC provided site leadership and on-site training/support for the DSWs.
- FEMA approved over \$9M for housing and other needs in the County to date.

» **March 2**

- Equus relayed 46 households with checkout dates of March 1-4. Over 50% of those households were placed; other households either declined further services, were not able to be contacted, or have not followed up with Equus. With the assistance of County Staff, Equus continued to reconcile and transition the remaining households.



Equus further indicated that the SDHC list was with Sure Stays Hotels, and they were prioritized by transitioning them into the county program via the checkout date.

- The County developed task forces and action plans focused on key recovery activities including Mental Health, ETL, Data, Public Information/Community Engagement, and Food Assistance.
- FEMA DSA teams deployed to National City, Spring Valley, La Presa, Emerald Hill Community, Groveland, and Imperial to provide in-person information and help affected residents register for FEMA assistance.
- From February 11 – March 2 a total of 115 staff conducted 42 events, facilitated the submission of 415 emergency temporary lodging in-take forms, and provided service support activities and referrals.

» **March 3**

- County DSWs covered 12 active hotels and provided information about mental health support, food assistance, and FEMA.
- The County Recovery Coordinator provided ETL program information and talking points to better equip DSWs supporting the DRCs.
- The County set up a call center to help Equus with the enrollments.

» **March 4**

- SDHC provided a list of 33 households that had been extended until March 8-11.
- County OES sent an AlertSanDiego campaign via email and text to 79,092 residents in flood-affected areas to share information on the DRCs.
- A single-source contract for mental health providers was routed for signature.
- DSW workers completed an outreach campaign for the ETL program by calling families who registered at a LAC.

» **March 5**

- The County conducted an ETL program informational meeting with the City of San Diego Manager for National City in preparation for the City Council meeting.
- SDCH staff continued to reconcile the disposition of their households with a focus on Ramada Inn Midway.
- The County worked in collaboration with SD VOAD to build partnerships with several non-profits to actively analyze their capacities and expansion capabilities to assist with food needs.

» **March 6**

- The Cal OES Director toured the San Diego DRCs.
- Equus sent out Disaster CalFresh flyers, in both English and Spanish, to 599 ETL households.

» **March 7**

- Flood survivors were able to register for the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP). County Self-Sufficiency staff worked at both DRCs to inform the public of the availability of food assistance programs.
- 25 DSWs visited all emergency temporary hotels and provided flyers indicating the program was extended up to March 25.

- FEMA IA Enrollment Teams were provided a listing of hotels and total households to support the enrollment of ETL participants.

» **March 8**

- SDHC confirmed that all Ramada Inn – Midway participants had been moved to alternate locations through the ETL program.
- The County received access to its first round of FEMA registration data for the ETL Program.
- SD VOAD was awarded the FEMA long-term case management contract. Through this case management work, SD VOAD was able to connect community members to food assistance and other resources.
- A single-source contract was utilized with a local CBO, Open Heart Leaders, to provide culturally competent and reflective behavioral health services.

» **March 9**

- Equus conducted a mass notification at four local area hotels where FEMA DSA teams were scheduling visits.
- The Director of the Department of Purchasing and Contracting (DPC) and two staff visited Ramada Inn National City to meet with hotel management and discussed challenges at the hotel regarding reservations and extensions. Progress was made in developing an action plan designed to avoid further issues and concerns with the reservation process and a report out was provided during the Policy Group meeting.

» **March 11**

- The last group of households placed with the Chicano Federation transitioned to the County ETL program.
- To assist individuals with AFN in the County, Cal OES, and FEMA partnered to host a web-based Whole Community Recovery Workshop.
- BHS reached an agreement with Open Heart Leaders to provide counseling and group therapy services for individuals within the County's ETL program experiencing mental/behavioral health challenges.
- The Harvey Family Foundation, in partnership with the Southbay Resource Team with Southeast Disaster Response Team, worked with DEHQ to obtain authorization to use the kitchen at the Jacobs Center to continue dinner meal service and encourage clients to register for Disaster Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) before the registration window closed.
- The OAROC began comparing the region-wide FEMA IA data with the County's ETL data to help determine the next steps and transition processes for those enrolled in assistance programs, as well as identify those who may be eligible for assistance but have not applied.
- The ETL program organized DSW teams to visit hotels to help facilitate connections to self-sufficiency programs and FEMA IA. Teams were equipped with computer resources to provide direction and help residents apply for services directly onsite.

» **March 12**

- The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to further extend the County ETL program to May 11th and provided an additional \$6.6M.

- Weekly SD VOAD Long-Term Recovery calls began with the City of San Diego and CBOs.
- The County hosted the Cal OES Applicants Briefing for CDAA reimbursement with the City of San Diego and other jurisdictions.
- The County held an ETL Transition Kickoff Meeting with the City of San Diego.
- The County sent a letter to the SDHC and the City of San Diego requesting staff support at the County EOC to support residents.
- DEHQ coordinated with local housing authorities in the cities of National City, Chula Vista, and San Diego, to organize a response to complaints and inspections of ETL hotels for flood survivors.
- The County Board of Supervisors was presented with options to establish appropriations in the OES, Services and Supplies, from the General Fund Reserve, to continue to provide food delivery services in support of those impacted by the emergency. Resources were being evaluated to expand a meal delivery effort to flood-displaced flood survivors staying at hotels through the ETL Program according to one of the three options covering either one, two, or three meals per day for 60 days. The request was approved with \$3M allotted for a one-time cost to fund ETL provide food services to those within the program.
- 20 DSWs visited the top five temporary emergency hotels with the highest occupancy to assist affected residents with applying for Self-Sufficiency Services and FEMA assistance.

» **March 13**

- The County led the ETL Transition Kickoff Meeting. The meeting discussed transition plans for clients currently enrolled in the County's ETL program who may have received FEMA assistance.
- The County, in partnership with FEMA, hosted two Storm and Flood Recovery Resources All-Sector Telebriefings to learn more about the latest recovery assistance, including housing resources, food assistance, mental health services, and financial aid.
- County OES sent an AlertSanDiego campaign via text and email notifying affected areas that applications for Disaster CalFresh would close on March 15.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and FEMA activated a Disaster Distress Helpline for residents experiencing emotional distress or mental health problems caused or aggravated by the winter storm.
- The Director of Cal OES visited both DRCs. Due to the high volume of services being provided, Cal OES extended state agency presence at both DRCs through March 23.
- BHS received a request from the County Fire Department for brochures containing behavioral health resources in English and Spanish.
- The DSW team arrived at the EOC and staffed the TDG; a multi-disciplinary team that looked at FEMA award data, ETL data, and how households could transition from the ETL program into other housing solutions.

**» March 14**

- A letter from the County Interim CAO was sent to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SDHC and the COO of the City of San Diego requesting staffing necessary to “assist with ongoing recovery operations, including the collection of documentation for NCS eligibility and assistance in communicating with City of San Diego residents in the County's ETL Program.”
- The Public Information Task Force, in coordination with the Community Engagement Task Force, developed a press release on the Storm and Flood Recovery Resources All-Sector Telebriefing.
- The Policy Group approved a plan to work with local grocery stores that provide shelf-stable food and fresh "ready to eat" meals for delivery to or pickup by individuals and households participating in the County's ETL Program.

**» March 15**

- The City of San Diego and County SDHC responded to the CAO letter where the County requested they join the TDG at the County EOC. The letter stated that one City staff or contractor and two SDHC housing locators would be provided.
- County OES sent an AlertSanDiego campaign via text and email notifying affected areas that applications for Disaster CalFresh were extended through March 22.
- The operation to assist families at the top five emergency hotels ended with a total of 100 households having been assisted.

**» March 16**

- The Feeding Task Force contacted multiple CBOs and local businesses to evaluate the capacity to expand current food delivery operations to additional hotels and/or begin new operations.
- The County shifted from daily curbside debris collection to support as-needed curbside debris collection twice a week until March 29 in the unincorporated communities.

**» March 17**

- BHS worked to utilize contracts to establish mobile outreach, screening, behavioral health/social service linkage, and navigation services for people displaced from their homes by the floods.
- The Feeding Task Force worked with the Veterans of Foreign Wars to determine their ability to expand their current feeding operations.

**» March 18**

- A second ETL program informational meeting was conducted with Carlos Aguirre, City Manager, National City.
- The TDG Charter was developed, in coordination with the City of San Diego and SDHC. The purpose of the TDG was to conduct routine case conferencing where individual ETL-participating household case management files are reviewed and other key factors are considered for program eligibility.
- The contract began with Open Heart Leaders to provide counseling and group therapy services for individuals within the County's ETL Program experiencing mental/behavioral health challenges.

- The Policy Group approved the Feeding Task Force to move forward with Uber Eats vouchers for participants in the County's ETL program.
- The data team matched 388 households placed in the County's ETL program, of which 210 received FEMA assistance.

» **March 19**

- The County coordinated a Day of Giving campaign and began to collect monetary donations through the San Diego Foundation.
- The County met with Uber to demonstrate the Uber Eats voucher process and review the terms and conditions of the voucher program agreement.
- Hotel reservation extensions were processed up until April 15 for eligible ETL households. Households were notified via the Equus One Call system through text, voice, and email. ETL participants who were staying at the Ramada Inn, National City were also notified about relocation options, if interested.

» **March 20**

- A meeting with the City of San Diego and SDHC was held to further refine the process and procedures for referring households from the County ETL program to the City of San Diego via the SDHC.
- A multi-disciplinary team, comprised of 20 County DSWs, Equus, BHS Community and Engagement workers, FEMA DSA teams, and trusted messenger community partners, engaged ETL participants and provided opportunities to register for FEMA IA and enroll in County and community services at five ETL hotels.
- Open Heart Leaders developed a plan for additional outreach and the initiation of onsite groups and individual counseling at the ETL hotels.
- Hygiene kits from SD VOAD, personal protective equipment (PPE), and COVID tests were distributed to ETL participants at the Ramada Inn, National City.

» **March 21**

- The Policy Group signed a contract with Uber to implement the Uber Eats Voucher Program. The policy/procedure was finalized for the first round of vouchers and the Feeding Task Force documented and adjusted them based on lessons learned.

» **March 22**

- County DSW teams visited all 64 ETL hotels and provided flyers announcing the feeding program through Uber Eats and that the County's ETL Program was extended up to April 15.
- Applications for Disaster CalFresh ended.
- FEMA approved over \$14M for housing and other needs and over \$1M for SBA loans in the County to date.
- 101 hygiene kits, 168 bottles of water, 160 masks, and 42 COVID-19 test kits were distributed to ETL participants at the Ramada Inn, National City.
- Information fliers regarding the Uber Eats Voucher Program were delivered door-to-door and a hotline was staffed to answer questions and provide assistance.
- The Feeding Task Force issued the first seven days of Uber Eats vouchers to the County's ETL Program participants. The first round of vouchers totaled up to \$350,000.



- The Food and Nutrition Service approved an extension of the Hot Foods Waiver for the County of San Diego through April 10. The Hot Foods Waiver allowed for hot, prepared foods to be purchased at Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) authorized retailers.

» **March 23**

- Participants used \$26,115.40 worth of Uber Eats vouchers to date (7% of the total issued).

» **March 25**

- Staff from the City of San Diego and SDHC reported to the County EOC in direct support of the County ETL Task Force. The activities were designed to enable the City of San Diego and SDHC to identify pathways for their jurisdictional households to transition out of the County ETL program and into housing solutions. Coordination and information sharing with this staff was conducted daily.
- Additional ETL program informational meetings were conducted with the City Manager of National City.
- Participants used \$83,886.21 worth of Uber Eats vouchers to date (25% of the total issued).
- The Feeding Task Force received a quote from Veterans of Foreign Wars to provide meals (i.e., breakfast, lunch, and dinner) to all ETL hotels in Hotel Circle, San Diego.

» **March 26**

- The County held discussions with FEMA, Cal OES, and the City of San Diego pertaining to FEMA Direct Housing (trailers).
- The County connected its Planning & Development Services (PDS) department and the City of San Diego with SD VOAD and other groups to collect information on permitting and regulations for rebuilding homes.

» **March 27**

- The County sent a letter to the City of San Diego regarding FEMA Direct Housing. The City responded and the County provided the City with a follow-up letter.
- The County held a follow-up coordination meeting with the City of San Diego and SDHC to further refine the process and procedures for referring households from the County ETL program to the City of San Diego via SDHC.
- The County requested additional DSWs. A training plan was developed, and notification resource packets were prepared. The County developed a communication plan in support of the concept of delivery which was reviewed and approved by the Policy Group. The County and City of San Diego staff called all currently ineligible ETL households to encourage them to apply for FEMA IA.

» **March 28**

- The County supported the City of National City site visit/meeting at the County OAEOC. The meeting focused on ETL status updates on County ETL participating households from National City's jurisdiction.
- The County and City of San Diego staff called 506 households (216 answered and 169 did not answer).

- AlertSanDiego campaign texts were sent, notifying affected areas that debris management curbside pickup was being extended until April 26.
- The County's ETL Program participants used \$160,316 worth of Uber Eats vouchers (48% of the total issued).
- All Transition Determination Notification Letters were approved by the CAO. The Transition Notification Team conducted training in preparation for the soft launch.
- Two City of National City staff reported to the County's EOC to support the TDG.

» **March 29**

- A letter from the County Interim CAO was sent to the City COO Chief Operating Officer, City of San Diego regarding further information on applying for FEMA Direct Housing.
- The County held a follow-up coordination meeting with the City of San Diego and SDHC to further refine the process and procedures for referring households from the County ETL program to the City of San Diego via SDHC.
- A second round of Uber Eats vouchers was dispersed to participants in the County's ETL Program. An estimated \$310,768 worth of Uber Eats vouchers were distributed to 836 households.
- The County extended curbside debris collection to April 26, 2024.

» **March 30**

- The County published a County News Center news release regarding the next steps of the County's ETL Program. This was distributed to the media, stakeholders, and PIOs, and was posted to the County's social media. News releases were sent to the Community Engagement Task Force Lead to be shared with the CBOs.

## **APRIL**

» **April 1**

- The Community Engagement Task Force attended the SD Disaster Relief meeting at YMCA.
- The County of San Diego ETL participants were provided a digital voucher for Uber Eats to purchase food for their families in seven-day increments. The digital voucher amounts were determined by the number of people in the household, whether or not hotel breakfast was provided, and whether program participants were receiving food from other organizations. For example, on average, a family of four may receive \$476.

» **April 2**

- County ETL Transition Notification Letter Delivery was initiated with a soft launch. A DSW request was submitted, a training plan was in development, and notification resource packets were prepared. County and City of San Diego staff continued to call all ineligible ETL households to encourage them to apply for FEMA IA.
- According to a WebEOC entry, the City of San Diego deactivated its EOC. "The City of San Diego EOC is deactivating. As of 1700 the EOC is standing down from its current Level 3 Activation. City of San Diego OES and the EOC will continue to

support Recovery operations and partner agencies during normal business hours and will be on Duty Officer Status after hours.”

- This was the last day for vehicle abatement in the unincorporate areas. All vehicles were addressed.

» **April 3**

- The County initiated a pilot delivery of 71 (May11) Transition Notification Letters by the Transition Notification Team (TNT). The TNT consisted of three independent teams of three staff – two DSWs and one FEMA Case Manager. Initial in-person deliveries took place at the Ramada Inn and National City.
- 10 additional DSWs were onboarded to augment the staffing of the ETL / Feeding Call Center.
- FEMA DSA teams supported the Community Health and Resource Fair at the YMCA.

» **April 6**

- The County developed an onboarding process for new DSWs and templated a welcome email with access to the Community Engagement Task Force Recovery SharePoint.
- DSWs were trained on the Uber Eats and ETL Program call log, live calls, and voicemails. Staff created a flow chart to help the call team identify urgent needs and elevate them to the ETL or Feeding task forces.

» **April 10**

- County DSWs completed the delivery of the seven-day Transition Notification Letters, of which a total of 111 households contacted the County and provided information to have their eligibility extended up until May 11.

» **April 12**

- The draft Regional ETL Transition Working Group Charter was completed and socialized with key participants/municipalities for further input. The initial meeting with representation from the City of San Diego, SDHC, City of National City, and County Housing and Community Development Services was completed.
- The fourth round of Uber Eats vouchers was dispersed to participants in the County's ETL Program. An estimated \$332,367 worth of Uber Eats vouchers were distributed to 782 households. An overall estimated \$665,200 (51%) was spent of the approximate \$1,300,000 total issued.

» **April 15**

- FEMA DSA teams deployed to the Days Inn – El Cajon, Ramada – San Diego Airport, Travelodge – El Cajon, Roadway Inn – Lemon Grove, and Extended Stay America – San Diego/Fashion Valley to provide in-person information and help affected residents register for FEMA assistance.

» **April 16**

- The second County ETL transition Regional Coordination Group meeting was conducted. ETL updates were provided to regional partners followed by transition plan updates from the three housing authorities and/or municipalities.

» **April 17**

- BHS implemented the contract with the Joint Initiatives for Racial Equity in Health (JIREH) to provide community outreach, flood recovery, and connection to the San Diego Access and Crisis Line (ACL), 2-1-1 San Diego, and BHS resources.
- FEMA DSA teams deployed to the GreenTree Inn – San Diego/Mission Bay, Holiday Inn Express – La Mesa near San Diego State University (SDSU), Best Western – Chula Vista/Otay Valley, and Carlton Oaks Lodge – Santee to provide in-person information and help affected residents register for FEMA assistance.

» **April 18**

- The ETL confirmed over 646 hotel reservation extensions to May 11 were reflected in the Equus database. All hotel relocations due for extensions had been completed.
- FEMA DSA teams deployed to the Best Western San Diego – Miramar, Extended Stay America Suites – Sorrento Mesa, Motel 6 San Diego – North, and Days Inn by Wyndham – San Diego /Downtown/Convention Center to provide in-person information and help affected residents register for FEMA assistance.

» **April 19**

- FEMA completed the IA registration deadline and closed its in-person DRCs. FEMA support remained available by phone, online, and via the mobile app.
- FEMA DSA teams demobilized.
- The SBA closed its BRC in National City.
- FEMA extended the deadline to apply for SBA physical disaster loans from April 19 to May 4.
- The fifth round of Uber Eats vouchers, estimated at \$285,000, was dispersed to 657 households in the County's ETL Program. An overall estimated \$891,329 (56%) had been spent of the approximate \$1,600,000 total issued.

» **April 22**

- A SD VOAD's Case Manager Call Center went live, connecting affected residents with food resources, support services, health services, and mental health resources, as well as provided assistance with muck out and cleanup of flooded homes, mold suppression, and replacement of home items.
- The County of San Diego Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to extend the County's ETL and Uber Eats Voucher program for flood survivors through June 21.

» **April 24**

- The JIC led a County EOC tour for a San Diego Union-Tribune reporter.
- The ETL three-day Notification Letter was approved and translated to be utilized as needed.

» **April 25**

- An ETL Ineligibility Report was developed. The TDG conducted household case reviews and ETL eligibility determinations.
- The ETL program conducted the initial CDAA working group meeting which reviewed the charter and discussed the data-driven approach and methodology to capture ETL program costs.

» **April 26**

- The SSGP approved 15 flood survivors, with a cumulative total amount of \$110,996.38.
- The sixth round of Uber Eats vouchers, estimated at \$292,000, was dispersed to 645 households in the County's ETL Program. An overall estimated \$1,126,081 (55%) has been spent of the approximate \$1,900,000 total issued.
- The County shifted to once-a-week debris collection service until May 11, 2024.

**MAY**» **May 6**

- The ETL TNT began to conduct in-person deliveries to advise of the program closing.
- The ETL program reviewed and provided input to the three-day letter Communications Plan.

» **May 11**

- The County Public Works Department discontinued debris collection services in the unincorporated communities.
- The Policy Group approved an ETL program Compliance Review that was initiated to validate proof of residency and damage to residence.
- Team Rubicon conducted muckouts for flood-damaged homes followed by UMCOR who performed mold suppression on the impacted homes.

» **May 29**

- The National City Housing Authority signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

**JUNE**» **June 10**

- The SD VOAD launched "Week of Giving" to provide support to residents affected by the flood.

» **June 13**

- The County Interim CAO sent a memo to the County Board of Supervisors, reporting back on emergency management recommendations and what more could be done to strengthen regional emergency management capabilities. The report outlined 72 recommendations for consideration.


» **June 14**

- The 13<sup>th</sup> round of Uber Eats vouchers, estimated at \$225,000, was dispersed to 371 households in the County's ETL Program.

» **June 21**

- The County OAROC demobilized and returned to OES Staff Duty Officer Status.
- Equus and the City of San Diego demobilized from the EOC.
- The SSGP approved funding for 23 flood survivors, with a cumulative total amount of \$170,187.54.



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- FEMA approved over \$25M for housing and other needs and over \$45M for SBA loans in the County to date.
  - The Call Center and Task Forces responded to 4,947 calls and voicemails regarding the Uber Eats Voucher Program and the County's ETL Transition letters.
  - Total Week 13 of Uber Eats vouchers spent was \$192,487 out of the approximate \$225,000 (86%). An overall estimated \$2,871,982 was spent of the approximate \$3,631,000 (79%) total issued.

## SEPTEMBER

### » September 26

- Staff provided a memorandum that included an analysis of the resources and staffing needs that would be required to implement 40 emergency management recommendations within the proposed timeframes. They also provided additional context necessary for the County Board of Supervisors' awareness when considering such resource allocations. In this memo, staff noted they would continue to proceed with the implementation of 30 action items that do not require additional Board direction or resources within the timeframes identified.

## OCTOBER

### » October 22

- The County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to support staff's implementation of eight emergency management recommendations and to return to the Board in future budget cycles with staffing resource needs for an OES recovery division and a community division.
- The County Board of Supervisors took action to direct staff to conduct an audit of the County's ETL contract.

# Report Development Methodology

After-Action reporting involves a thorough data collection methodology to determine what was expected to occur during an emergency response, what occurred, and how planning and preparedness can be improved for the next emergency response. Hagerty and the County used a multi-month stakeholder engagement process to bring together different perspectives across the response and recovery. This assessment culminated in observations and findings that Hagerty could analyze for their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges to provide actionable recommendations for the County to improve its emergency planning, training, and future exercise programs.

Hagerty used a three-phase data collection process to conduct the assessment using the following methods:

- » Document Review
- » After-Action Focus Group Interviews
- » Surveys

Figure 9 shows the original project timeline from project kickoff (July 2024) through the delivery of this report:

Figure 9: Project Timeline

## Project Timeline

| Phase/ Event                                    | Weeks 1-4 | Weeks 5-8 | Weeks 9-20 |
|---|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Project Kickoff & Ongoing Project Management |           |           |            |
| 2. Document Review, Surveys, and Interviews     |           |           |            |
| 3. AAR / IP Development                         |           |           |            |
| 4. Project Close-Out                            |           |           |            |

## Document Review

The Document Review process included an evaluation and analysis of 236 relevant existing plans, documents, policies, and guidance publications to aid in determining the County's level of preparedness and the success of its response. The review process enabled Hagerty to gather vital information to provide well-informed subsequent recommendations.

Below are examples of categories of documents that were reviewed during the Document Review process:

- » Planning Documents (23 documents reviewed)
  - Emergency Operations Center Staff Planning
- » Operations Documents (213 documents reviewed)
  - Communications with County businesses and public
  - Standard Operating Procedures
  - Task Force Operating Procedures
  - Incident Action Plans
  - External Outreach

- Hotwash Documentation
- Situation Reports
- Survey Responses
- Operational Planning Documents

## After-Action Interviews

Hagerty facilitated 29 discussion-based interviews with internal and external stakeholders involved in some aspects of the County's Severe Storm and Flood response and recovery operations. Interviews were conducted with task force leaders, CBOs, and County staff to gather insights on operational effectiveness, resource coordination, and areas for improvement. These interviews aimed at gathering data from stakeholders about the preparation, response, and recovery activities that identify best practices and areas for improvement in the following focus areas:

- » Response Strategy
  - Operational Area Emergency Operations Center Operations
  - Operational Area Coordination
  - Community Engagement
  - Emergency Temporary Lodging
- » Public Information Management
- » Data Management and Reporting







These meetings allowed Hagerty to support the County:

- » Identify elements of the response process that were successful and should be maintained in future response efforts.
- » Identify elements of the response process that were challenging.
- » Identify areas of all-hazards planning and capability development for which stakeholders require further guidance, explanation, and/or training.

## Results and Assessment

The following section presents an assessment of the focus areas identified by the County for this evaluation and is demonstrated in Table 1:

### Focus Areas

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  <p>Operational Area Emergency<br/>Operations Center</p> |  <p>Operational Area Coordination</p> |  <p>Community Engagement</p>              |
|  <p>Emergency Temporary Lodging</p>                      |  <p>Public Information Management</p> |  <p>Data Management and<br/>Reporting</p> |

*Table 1: Response Focus Areas*

This AAR assessed each focus area using three distinct evaluation techniques. These included planning team meetings, documentation review, and a stakeholder interview process.

In some cases, key findings may apply to more than one of the focus areas; to the greatest extent possible, this document seeks to align key findings to the sections where they are most applicable.

## Operational Area Emergency Operations Center

FEMA defines an EOC as “The physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support incident management (on-scene operations) activities normally takes place.” This centralized point should create accessible pathways for stakeholders to seek pertinent information, coordinate resources, and maintain situational awareness through reported and documented data from community leaders. The EOC supports critical missions throughout the longevity of responses until returning to steady-state operations.

The OAEOC Operations findings in this report specifically focus on the County’s activation, operational coordination, and operational support throughout the severe storm and flooding.

Interviews with stakeholders acknowledged the positive impact of a centralized point to look for support throughout the response. The OAEOC improved the process of requesting logistical support and resources for County partners by removing red tape, which typically hinders support efforts.

## Strengths

### STRENGTH

**Effective Coordination and Communication:** The early activation of the County's OAEOC and regular coordination calls facilitated communication between cities and the County.

### STRENGTH

**Comprehensive Resource Management:** On the second day of the disaster, the County started planning and logistics in preparation for opening a LAC. The County opened its LAC, which included 39 agencies providing centralized resources and aid recovery services, six days after the original disaster. Effective coordination with DRC managers and external partners enabled efficient distribution of resources and access to services. The professionalism demonstrated by the LAC sets a standard for local partners and served as a model for the County's future LAC operations.

### STRENGTH

**Collaborative Professionalism:** The County team exhibited professionalism and collaboration in the OAEOC through the creation of presentations, templates, and recorded training materials. The County team streamlined the onboarding process for unfamiliar staff, enhancing overall efficiency and ensuring that Task Forces felt included and heard during OAEOC meetings.

### STRENGTH

**Effective Debris Removal:** Debris removal was successfully managed at unincorporated sites, with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) collaborating to ensure correct processes and streamlined reimbursements. Staff worked diligently to address debris challenges at the onset of the disaster and continued efforts for months until all needs were addressed.

### STRENGTH

**Rapid Implementation of Operational Coordination:** Conducting coordination calls starting on the first day helped to get situational awareness from the cities. The OAEOC was activated early as the County realized that it was going to be a large event with additional coordination. A local proclamation of an emergency was issued quickly. Additionally, the utilization of Crisis Track allowed for rapid damage assessments and assisted with gaining a Presidential Disaster Declaration.

### STRENGTH

**In-Person Presence in the EOC:** Having team members from Planning present in the EOCs made communicating needs and asking for information or clarification in person easier. Some team members appreciated the opportunity for hybrid in-person and teleworking as well.



## STRENGTH

**Innovative and Effective Meal Delivery:** The Feeding Group Task Force demonstrated exceptional performance by securing and organizing the Uber Eats contract, introducing a novel, new approach. This innovative program successfully delivered meals to residents unable to cook at home, establishing a potential model for future responses.

## STRENGTH

**EAP Program Support:** The availability of a helpful therapist through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to support internal emergency response and recovery staff was seen as beneficial and is encouraged to be maintained for future extended recovery efforts.

## Areas For Improvement

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Utilizing Lessons Learned:** Given the similarities and long-standing needs, areas for improvement from the COVID-19 After-Action Report could have been carried over to address various situations during the incident.

#### Recommendation

**Apply Lessons Learned from Previous Responses:** Ensure that after-action findings (AAFs) from previous responses are reviewed and integrated into current planning and preparation efforts. By applying these insights in advance, the County can improve response effectiveness and address long-standing needs more effectively.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Leadership and Direction:** It was challenging to make decisions and adhere to policies with the rapid pace of operations and compressed timelines needed to swiftly respond to the great needs of the community. EOC leadership and task forces encountered an overwhelming number of directives from multiple high-level officials, leading to unclear and sometimes conflicting priorities. Many decisions across different levels were made swiftly, with a sense of urgency to respond to the communities in need; conditions which did not provide opportunities for comprehensive vetting or robust discussion. This resulted in staff confusion, unpreparedness among task forces, and decisions being made or reversed by some task forces operating in silos.

#### Recommendation

**Support Leadership and Decision-Making Processes:** To the extent feasible, County team members should follow principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), ICS, and California's Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). This will establish a centralized communication protocol for managing directives from multiple high-level officials and ensure alignment with existing policies and procedures for disaster response, recovery, and potential state and federal aid. The unique nature of a future incident may require the County to

clarify who is responsible for which decisions are being made, whether by the Board of Supervisors, CAO, Deputy Chief Administrative Officers (DCAOs), Incident Commander, or EOC leadership to avoid confusion. The County may also consider further encouraging a culture of collaboration and a shared-structured decision-making process that includes vetting of information with input from County SMEs to enhance accuracy and adherence to County policies (similar to day-to-day operations). A more structured chain of command with one point of contact in charge and deputies providing support (e.g., Recovery Manager and Deputy Managers) aids in providing clarity in direction. These recommendations are intended to reduce confusion and uncoordinated efforts, improve decision-making, and aid in better meeting expectations and service delivery.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Collaborative Professionalism:** Due to the expedited nature of response and recovery, the County experienced some challenges that included a desire and expectation to move quickly to respond to the needs of the community during a high-pressure situation; however, operations sometimes lagged and challenges included timeliness in providing an org chart, ensuring EOC had diverse representation, providing more comprehensive just-in-time training for the rotating DSWs, and better utilization of DSW skill sets.

## Recommendation

**Collaboration with Liaisons:** The EOC is a place that brings people together with a wide range of professional expertise and skill sets to make the most informed and timely decisions as incidents evolve. To maximize this benefit, County personnel should memorialize the best practices of orienting DSWs and liaisons to the EOC, including representatives that are in close communication with the impacted communities, and including their perspectives during decision-making. It is also important to capture and display the organizational structure at the earliest opportunity to assist with clarity, direction, and identifying potential gaps in representation. Additionally, when sending DSW in response, departments could make it a continued practice to, where possible, re-assign staff that are eager to serve the community in a great time of need, have proven track records of thriving in dynamic work environments, and are a good match for the response/recovery position skillsets that are needed to contribute to the success of the disaster response and recovery efforts.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Rate of Response:** Due to the unprecedented disaster and recovery nature of this event, the County had to create and implement new programs to meet the needs of the community. The response was coupled with the continued expectation of operating with a sense of urgency to meet the needs of disaster survivors. Doing new things that do not have existing procedures takes additional time to implement and a needed urgent rate of response does not often lend an opportunity to discuss and vet decisions. All the aforementioned conditions presented challenges

for staff. Additionally, some County staff experienced burnout from working long hours/days in emergency response and recovery for extended timeframes.

### Recommendation

**Evaluate Response Rate Capacity and Scale Resources:** To support response and recovery staff, the County may consider the response rate that is needed to effectively respond to the needs of a community and scale its resources in disaster response and recovery to meet expectations for timelines and service delivery. Communication regarding the resources needed to accomplish tasks within the desired timeframe should continuously occur throughout all levels of the emergency response and recovery operations. Additionally, the County may consider a more formal approach for establishing clear priorities, goals, and objectives to manage tasks and reduce the need for rework. The County may consider introducing a formal vetting process for programmatic or financial decisions, to ensure that the community's needs and interests are being supported as efficiently as possible. The County may also consider staffing resources needed to respond to both the shorter-term emergency and longer-term recovery efforts, to ensure there are two to three staff to support identified response and recovery positions and to assist with the 12/24-hour shift rotations and to ensure staff are taking scheduled breaks and days off while operations maintain continuity. The County may also consider a hybrid schedule to support mental and physical well-being. These considerations may help to maintain employee morale and team efficiency during the extended response recovery efforts.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Jurisdictional Roles and Resources:** The County Board of Supervisors provided direction and funding to County staff to respond in new ways and meet the needs of the disaster survivors, irrespective of jurisdictional lines. This was a new approach for many County staff, which resulted in confusion and tension regarding jurisdictional responsibilities and taking on new roles and programs without a clear understanding of coordination with other agencies or existing resources to deliver. Staff were sometimes assigned tasks outside their expertise or trained experience; a perceived lack of flexibility and innovative thinking in addressing the unprecedented challenges impacted efficiency and morale.

### Recommendation

**Enhance Direction and Communication When New Policies Are Implemented:** The County Board of Supervisors are elected officials who provide policy direction on a wide variety of regional services and unincorporated county municipal programs. The County may consider that when policy direction includes creating and implementing new programs or services, enhanced direction communication will help staff to have more clarity, coordination, and efficiency. Additionally, the County may consider needs for future disasters (e.g., training, contracts, resources) that can be implemented now to support future emergency response and recovery efforts.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Enhancing DSW Efficiency and Role Clarity in the EOC:** The restraints of working in a physical EOC lead to inefficiencies and frustration among some reassigned DSW personnel. Additionally, some staff were called to assist in the EOC but were sometimes left without clear direction or tasks. This perceived lack of organization not only caused frustration but also prevented personnel from attending to their other important daily responsibilities for which they were often still responsible. For instance, legal personnel found it challenging to manage their work due to the need for privacy and adequate space, which were lacking in the EOC environment and was under renovation at the time.

### Recommendation

**Optimizing EOC Efficiency through Space Management and Training:** To enhance the effectiveness of the EOC, DSWs, and other staff, it may serve as beneficial to allocate private workspaces for roles requiring confidentiality, such as legal personnel, ensuring they can perform their critical tasks without disruption. EOC leadership may consider clearly defining roles and responsibilities for all personnel, especially those less familiar with the environment so that everyone understands their tasks and contributions to the overall mission. Implement an efficient system for task assignments, ensuring that each individual has meaningful work and remains engaged. Comprehensive training and orientation should be provided to familiarize EOC personnel with procedures and expectations, reducing confusion and downtime. Additionally, clarifying the role of the Policy Group to provide clear policy guidance and EOC operations will help to implement the policy direction. Ensure consistent resource allocation, avoid abrupt shifts, and maintain in-person leadership to effectively oversee operations. This approach will help prevent role overlap, reduce confusion, and enhance overall response effectiveness.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Funding Allocation:** New policy direction with the absence of established protocols, contracts, and strong relationships led to a potentially inefficient use of County funds. Critical community-focused efforts such as feeding, non-congregate sheltering, coordination with city authorities, and data collection faced significant challenges in executing their tasks due to a lack of clear information, new processes, and funds being delayed, used inefficiently, or allocated to organizations that were less involved in the local community's efforts.

### Recommendation

**Pre-Established Funding Allocation:** After clarifying policy direction for future disaster response and recovery efforts, develop and implement standardized protocols and pre-negotiated contracts or MOUs with key vendors and community partners that ensure County funds are allocated effectively during an emergency. Strengthening relationships with CBOs and city authorities to improve coordination and resource management (e.g., feeding, non-congregate sheltering, and data collection), particularly in community-driven initiatives.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Organizational Structure:** SOPs provide for structured planning and task force integration at the EOC. The departure from traditional and regular planning meetings and the delay in having a standard recovery organizational chart for task forces led to confusion and inefficiency resulting in disjointed operations, silos, and frequent shifts in focus.

### Recommendation

**Streamline Decision-Making and Enhance Transparency:** To the extent possible, establish and adhere to SOPs to support consistency and efficiency in EOC operations. Implement regular planning meetings to create a structured organizational rhythm. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of task forces, if they are implemented in the future, and ensure ongoing involvement in County and city leadership discussions to maintain operations aligned with decisions and direction. Enhance communication to prevent assumptions about staff knowledge and provide clear, timely updates to manage rapid changes and maintain program focus.

### Other:

### Recommendation

**Jurisdictional Responsibility Management:** Encourage jurisdictions with designated responsibilities, such as housing, to manage those responsibilities directly and without transferring between agencies. This approach will prevent costly transitions and ensure that operational costs are minimized and effectively utilized, benefiting the community.

### Recommendation

**Regular Training and Drills:** Implement regular training and drills for the CAO's Office, County Board of Supervisors staff, all County Executives, and key positions to ensure familiarity with the ICS, SEMS, NIMS, and emergency response and recovery procedures. Extend training to lower levels to provide backfill capabilities and facilitate smooth transitions in roles due to turnover.

### Recommendation

**Consistent Leadership and Real-Time Data Management:** Appoint a specific, consistent lead for each group or task force from the beginning of the response. Develop and utilize applications or electronic systems for real-time data collection and transmission to improve data management and reduce delays. Additionally, incorporate people with technology and platform (e.g., Microsoft Office) experience to facilitate different aspects (e.g., quality management, data input, etc.).

### Recommendation

**Pre-Established Call List and Role Clarity:** Maintain a pre-established call list of individuals trained in SEMS/NIMS, and EOC position-specific training. Ensure clarity in roles and responsibilities and train staff accordingly to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in emergency response and recovery.



## Operational Area Coordination

Operational area coordination aligns resources, information, and actions across multiple jurisdictions and agencies within the County to effectively respond to emergencies. This coordination effort ensures that local governments, special districts, and other stakeholders collaborate seamlessly to manage resources, share information, and execute response plans. By fostering clear communication channels and establishing a unified command structure, operational area coordination minimizes redundancy, reduces response times, and enhances the overall effectiveness of emergency operations. It also plays a vital role in maintaining situational awareness, enabling decision-makers to prioritize efforts and allocate resources efficiently, ultimately leading to a more resilient and responsive emergency management system.

### Strengths

#### STRENGTH

**Empowering Board Authority:** The County Board of Supervisors voted to address community needs, empowering County staff to meet those needs effectively.

#### STRENGTH

**Effective Communication Flow:** The Policy Group maintained constant communication with the County Board of Supervisors, supporting frequent updates and the flow of information between the EOC and higher-level officials.

#### STRENGTH

**Regional Capabilities Analysis:** On January 30, 2024, the County Board of Supervisors directed the Interim CAO to assess and report back on what more can be done to strengthen the regional emergency management capabilities. The process involved a detailed consideration of preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. It also included community outreach meetings throughout the recovery process to incorporate their input. The result of this effort identified four categories of recommended actions.

Each recommended action was further broken down to identify recommendations that require the County Board of Supervisors' direction and/or additional resources, those that do not require approval or additional resources, the lead department, and the estimated timeframe for completion (90 days, six months, one year). The four categories of recommended actions were A. Regionwide Readiness and Training. B. Accessible, Accurate, Timely, and Translated Information. C. Community Resources: Housing, Food, Transportation, Behavioral Health. D. Strengthening Capacity and Coordination with Volunteers/CBOs.

The detailed review and recommendations for improving regional capabilities demonstrated a commitment to serving the community and improving resilience. The resulting matrix of

recommendations also helps provide a framework to leverage lessons learned and implement best practices. A copy of this report is included in Appendix C: Documents.

## STRENGTH

**Innovation to Overcome New Challenges:** This event presented several unconventional challenges for the command staff requiring adaptability with the implementation of new and innovative solutions. Although personnel identified many areas for improvement along the way, the result was the County's ability to implement new processes, technologies, and partnerships for data collection, housing, feeding, and public communication. The lessons learned are expected to improve the County's preparedness and response strategies.

## STRENGTH

**Innovative Contract Management:** The Purchasing and Contracts Department quickly established and expanded contracts to support lodging needs, engaged community providers, and activated mental health contracts in response to public outcry. The Department was proactive and effective, notably in managing the DSW Program, which was well executed.

## STRENGTH

**Board Directed Reports:** The regional capabilities analysis memo, directed by the County Board of Supervisors, is a strength in that it directed a proactive internal review to seek future improvement of the County's regional emergency management service delivery. While there were challenges implementing this Board direction while concurrently maintaining emergency response and recovery operations, the result was a positive outcome with the Board of Supervisors unanimously voting on October 22, 2024, for staff to implement eight recommendations and return to the Board in future budget cycles with staffing resource needs.

## Areas For Improvement

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Response Contracts:** Stakeholders and staff expressed concern over the contracts utilized or awarded during the response and recovery efforts. Some community members questioned the procurement and awarding process, as well as the appropriateness of funds allocated. While contracts in place were innovative and beneficial to flood survivors, stakeholders felt that the costs associated were extremely high and did not accurately reflect the community's needs. Additionally, deficiencies in services tied to the contracts (i.e., data tracking) made it difficult to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the services provided.

### Recommendation

**Transparent Contracting:** The County may consider conducting a review of the procurement and awarding process to ensure transparency, cost-effectiveness, and alignment with community needs. The County may also consider establishing and implementing clear policy decisions on

the County's direction in future response efforts, especially regarding contracted services and responsibilities related to food and shelter. Additionally, ensure that contracts are proactive with clearly defined expectations and capabilities, and include data tracking mechanisms.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**DSW Utilization:** Stakeholders noted high turnover rates among DSWs and the need to improve overall effectiveness by ensuring clarity in the assignment process and utilization of personnel. To prevent the dispatch of individuals who are not able to pause their regular duties to fully commit to the disaster response or recovery function, clarify the nature of DSW assignments and emphasize the importance of these roles. Avoid mismatches by aligning individuals' skills and roles with the tasks required and provide clear instructions to prevent situations where personnel arrive expecting one task but are reassigned to something different.

#### Recommendation

**DSW Management:** To reduce high turnover and improve DSW effectiveness, clarify and re-train on the mandatory and essential nature of DSW assignments. This could include formal training for at least three shifts of all key positions within the EOC to ensure a thorough understanding of their roles and establish a pool of trained staff for backup. Communicate these expectations to all employees and supervisors to ensure that everyone is aligned and understands their responsibilities. Enhance training programs to equip DSWs with necessary skills and provide ongoing support. Additionally, formalize an onboarding process for volunteers and identify a single point of contact within OES, Human Resources, and other departments. This can help to develop a systematic approach for assigning roles, including clear instructions and communication to prevent mismatches. The County may consider regularly monitoring and adjusting the DSW deployment process, incorporating staff feedback to enhance overall efficiency and effectiveness.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Adherence to Incident Command Structure:** Stakeholders and staff noted a gap in effective leadership due to the lack of familiarity with the SEMS, NIMS, and ICS. Without the utilization of the structure, responses and requests might have been missed or not taken care of as efficiently as possible. Those in leadership positions who are familiar with the ICS structure can educate external stakeholders by relying upon the skills, abilities, and information provided by their knowledge of the command structure, as well as County personnel.

#### Recommendation

**Enhance ICS Adherence and Leadership Training:** To improve response effectiveness and maintain internal coordination, strengthen adherence to the ICS structure. Ensure leaders practice and trust each other by increasing familiarity with emergency management processes and providing basic ICS/SEMS/NIMS training. Additionally, accelerate the development of organizational charts and promptly establish a recovery ICS structure to guide response and

recovery efforts. Increase emergency management experience and training for higher County leadership positions to better handle responses beyond normal operations.

#### Other:

#### Recommendation

**Maintain Clear Storm Drains and Culverts:** CBO members expressed concerns with debris in storm drains and culverts. Each municipality in the region is responsible for implementing its own public works, capital projects, and stormwater programs. The County is responsible for implementing these programs for the unincorporated areas. The County may consider convening a regional collaboration meeting with local jurisdictions to discuss the condition of the storm drains and culverts in each of their respective locations and share information and best practices on how each jurisdiction's infrastructure is being routinely inspected and maintained, especially before inclement weather. Additionally, jurisdictions may consider including storm drain and culvert projects in their respective Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) and seek external funding, such as the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to support regular maintenance and upgrades.

## Community Engagement

Community engagement is vital for fostering trust, resilience, and effective recovery. Engaging with the community allows emergency managers to gain insights into the specific needs and concerns of affected populations, ensuring that recovery efforts are both responsive and inclusive. By involving community members in decision-making processes, emergency managers can tailor recovery strategies to better address local priorities and cultural contexts, leading to more sustainable outcomes. Additionally, active community engagement helps build trust between residents and authorities, which is crucial for the successful implementation of recovery plans and for preparing the community for future emergencies. Ultimately, community engagement empowers residents, enhances transparency, and strengthens the overall recovery process, making it more effective and equitable.

The County worked with CBOs to provide resources ranging from food to mental health services to people within the community. The collaboration has continued to support people in their prolonged recovery.

#### Strengths

#### STRENGTH

**Enhanced Community Engagement and Resource Distribution:** The County significantly improved community engagement during the incident by participating in community meetings, involving members directly, and creating space at the EOC for increased transparency and participation. This elevated level of engagement complemented the eventually successful

resource distribution efforts, where the response team effectively partnered with CBOs to provide shelter and food, setting an example for future collaborations and resource distribution.

### STRENGTH

**Effective Call Center Operations:** The establishment of a call center provided direct contact with residents, allowing for real-time feedback on needs, especially for those affected by policies. The call center utilized a range of communication methods including flyers, emails, and texts, to disseminate information promptly. The team's ability to deliver timely and effective support showcased the call center as a successful model for future operations.

### STRENGTH

**Effective Hotline Implementation:** Establishing a hotline for impacted residents to communicate with the community engagement task force was a notable success. It provided a channel for residents to report issues and barriers related to lodging or feeding, enhancing accountability and transparency. This system effectively addressed real-time concerns and facilitated better community support.

### STRENGTH

**Skilled Call Center Staff:** The call center staff, who had experience in phone-based communication and disaster response, were particularly effective in their roles. Their background in social work and communications management contributed to successful interactions with clients. Despite occasional challenges with messaging, their ability to deliver information effectively was a key strength of the call center operation.

### Area For Improvement

#### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Community and Internal Engagement:** There was a desire for more community input and better engagement from other jurisdictions. CBOs were invited to sit in the County OAEOC to have a voice because of strained relationships with the CBOs at the start of the incident. However, establishing trust and relationships during an emergency proved challenging.

#### Recommendation

**Enhance Community and Internal Engagement Strategies:** Develop and implement strategies for ongoing community and jurisdictional engagement to build trust and improve relationships before emergencies arise. Strengthen collaboration with CBOs by fostering pre-incident relationships and establishing regular communication channels. Ensure CBOs and other stakeholders have meaningful roles in the EOC and involve them in planning and training activities related to Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD)/SD VOAD to facilitate trust-building and effective engagement during incidents.

Incorporate a person-centered approach to response and recovery, such as attention to dietary needs, sensitivities, and other individual needs. Develop strategies to inform and refine future response and recovery efforts, ensuring that community engagement practices evolve and meet the needs of diverse populations.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Emergency Management Training:** Stakeholders expressed an interest in emergency management/disaster recovery training for CBOs. While CBOs are already well acquainted with the community's needs and their effective roles, many lack formal disaster management training. Training and task tracking could in turn enable CBOs to collaborate more effectively with the County, prevent a duplication of efforts and resources, and ensure that the community is getting the proper care and coordinated response.

### Recommendation

**Support CBO Training:** The County may consider supporting disaster management training for CBOs and local communities. A suggestion is to encourage communities to conduct their own disaster assessments and develop a comprehensive emergency plan. The County can support these efforts by establishing policies that support disaster training for CBOs and community planning groups. The County could also organize workshops and develop tabletop exercises to help communities create their own disaster plans, including key areas of focus such as meeting locations, information dissemination, and other coordination processes.

To ensure community preparedness, the County and communities can conduct a gap analysis to identify areas where communities lack essential disaster management capabilities. This analysis can help tailor training programs and resources. Additionally, the County can provide resources and tools to make sure the community plans are implemented effectively. This will overall improve coordination pre-and-post disaster.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Additional Costs for Families:** While the Uber Eats program was innovative, it incurred extra costs for families who had to cover expenses not fully addressed by the program, impacting their financial situation. Uber Eats created issues with account holds and overdraft fees, discouraging some individuals from using the benefit due to personal financial concerns.

### Recommendation

**Establish Emergency Response MOUs:** The County may consider establishing MOUs with CBOs and service providers to facilitate communication and coordination with the EOC. Incorporate pre-established agreements with service providers (e.g., Uber, Instacart) into the planning, and prepare contract templates to expedite emergency responses. Additionally, pre-plan and develop contracts with approved micro-local businesses to serve as feeding sources or



potential resource hubs for future disasters, where appropriate. These agreements can enhance preparedness and ensure timely, coordinated responses.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Technology Barriers:** Some flood survivors, particularly older adults, lacked technological experience or access, such as using email or texting, which hindered their ability to access resources.

### Recommendation

**Address Technology Barriers to Accessing Resources:** Implement support systems to assist individuals who may lack technological experience or access. Provide alternative methods for accessing resources, such as phone support and in-person assistance, and offer technology training sessions to improve digital literacy. Communication channels can be used as inclusive and accessible platforms for all community members, regardless of their technological proficiency.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Building Trust and Improving Communication:** Address the historical lack of trust in government by establishing a dedicated space for agreement and transparent communication, especially when working with CBOs, COADs, and SD VOAD. The absence of a designated liaison and issues with miscommunication led to dissatisfaction and rumors, as groups felt unsupported and had unanswered questions. To repair and build trust, ensure consistent and clear communication of resources and updates.

### Recommendation

**Increase Transparency with Community:** Allocate dedicated staff resources to County OES to establish specialized liaison teams. These teams can manage communication and relationships between the County and community organizations, such as those identified as CBOs, COAD, and SD VOAD, ensuring effective collaboration and coordination. This will ensure consistent, transparent communication and timely responses to queries, helping to build and repair trust. Develop a structured approach for sharing information about resources and updates to avoid miscommunication and address historical issues of mistrust. Additionally, create mechanisms for ongoing feedback and collaboration to foster stronger partnerships and improve overall support during emergencies.

### Other:

### Recommendation

**Develop Community Network:** The County may consider continuing to strengthen relationships with CBOs due to their hands-on role within the community. This can be achieved by developing a cross-collaborative, formal infrastructure of vetted organizations that can be relied upon during future disasters. By building a network, the County can ensure a more efficient and effective

response, leveraging the expertise and established presence of CBOs to better meet community needs in an emergency.

### Recommendation

**CBO MOUs:** The County may establish MOUs or otherwise clarify expectations with the CBOs and non-profit organizations involved before the disbursement of funds. This will help prevent miscommunication, reduce confusion, and ensure that non-profit organizations are not being overlooked for potential funding.

## Emergency Temporary Lodging

The ETL Program provided support for those impacted by the January flooding. This pilot program was a combined effort between the County, City of San Diego, and other cities and community partners. The goal was to provide safe housing options for residents whose homes were damaged by the flooding, with the end goal of transitioning residents back to their houses or making other arrangements with local housing authorities.

### Strengths

#### STRENGTH

**Effective Shelter and Food Provision:** The team successfully provided shelter and food to everyone affected by the disaster. Despite the complexity and scale of the situation, the team effectively partnered with CBOs and Uber Eats to deliver resources to the community. This novel approach provided an example for other jurisdictions, which are now considering adopting similar partnership strategies for future responses.

#### STRENGTH

**Consistent Liaison Support:** It was seen as helpful to have the presence of an Equus liaison from the beginning to the end of the ETL process. Communication and daily meetings with Equus helped with information flow within emergency operations opportunities to address data and operational issues.

### Areas for Improvement

#### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Resource Allocation and Identification:** There was a need to identify true flood survivors versus other community members in need of shelter as the disaster compounded existing community needs, leading to operational challenges. The ETL program lacked visibility regarding the number of pre-existing unhoused individuals, which affected resource distribution and program effectiveness.

### Recommendation

**Improve Resource Allocation and Identification Processes:** Enhance resource allocation by developing robust systems for accurately identifying and differentiating between true disaster survivors and other community members in need. Address operational challenges by integrating data on pre-existing unhoused populations and the expected population of impacted areas to ensure effective resource distribution. Implement processes to improve visibility and track needs more accurately, which will enhance the effectiveness of programs and resource allocation.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Emergency Temporary Lodging Implementation Issues:** Challenges arose with the ETL's implementation and communication, which led to discrepancies between policy direction and actual practices, particularly regarding non-congregate sheltering. Flood survivors faced challenges with program eligibility, sometimes due to misinformation, technology/resource barriers, citizen status, or fear of house looting, leaving large populations underserved. Additionally, due to the changing direction, it was difficult for staff to determine ineligibility for cases, in turn causing rework to determine and advocate decisions.

### Recommendation

**Improve Implementation and Communication for Emergency Temporary Lodging:** Address implementation issues with ETL by enhancing communication and alignment between policy direction and actual practices. Ensure that non-congregate sheltering guidelines are clearly defined and consistently applied. Implement regular reviews and updates to address discrepancies and improve the effectiveness of ETL programs, ensuring they meet the intended objectives and provide adequate support to those in need including the ability to remain in their community and school district if possible. Additionally, coordinate with the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to review scripting and outreach for immigrant households to ensure resources are being extended to vulnerable communities.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**ETL Policy:** The newness of the ETL program led to uncertainty about the program's future direction. Without a formal policy in place, the County may lack the necessary resources (e.g., personnel, funding, and contracts) to scale up and provide future non-congregate housing, should this be the chosen approach.

### Recommendation

**Continued ETL Program:** To address the uncertainty of the ETL program, and to ensure its future effectiveness, the County may explore and vet options for a comprehensive policy decision. This research could incorporate emergency response best practices and identify clear strategies for resource distribution. By developing comprehensive policy options for the future, the County may be better equipped with resources to improve its non-congregate housing options, and meet future needs.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Eligibility and Special Situations:** County personnel recognized the need to implement systems to better handle and clarify emergency lodging eligibility issues, including specialized situations, to avoid confusion and inefficiencies.

### Recommendation

**Clarified Eligibility:** Establish clear guidelines and processes to address complex cases and ensure that all eligibility criteria are communicated and applied consistently. This will help streamline operations and provide more effective support for individuals facing unique or special circumstances.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Cultural Sensitivity in Lodging:** Interviews revealed an observation of staffing and contractor interactions in lodging that lacked cultural sensitivity, leading to communication and service delivery difficulties.

### Recommendation

**Enhanced Cultural Sensitivity Training:** To improve communication and service delivery in ETL, provide cultural sensitivity training for all staff and contractors involved. This training may focus on understanding and respecting diverse cultural norms and practices, ensuring that interactions with individuals from different backgrounds are handled with care and consideration. Additionally, establish guidelines and protocols for culturally appropriate communication and service delivery, and monitor compliance to address any issues promptly. The County may consider working with the Health and Human Services agencies to navigate cultural sensitivities.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Hotel Costs for Services:** Some hotels requested payments for using rooms for services such as group therapy, which limited the effectiveness and reach of support provided.

### Recommendation

**Address Hotel Costs for Services:** The County may consider negotiating and establishing clear agreements with hotels to cover costs associated with using rooms for essential services, such as group therapy, to ensure these services are provided effectively and reach those in need. The County could develop guidelines and funding mechanisms to support these costs and avoid limitations on the effectiveness of support services.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Timeliness and Policy for Funding and Assistance:** During the response to unprecedented events, the County took on the atypical responsibility of managing funding assistance due to the unique circumstances. However, a need to improve the timeliness of funding approvals and resource implementation has been identified. Establishing clear procedures to prevent delays in

critical services, such as food provision, is essential. Additionally, developing and enforcing policies for direct cash assistance and public fund management will streamline processes, enhance transparency, and increase overall efficiency in delivering support services.

### Recommendation

**Empower Jurisdictions with Direct Funding and Enhance Communication:** The County may consider revisiting policy decisions regarding its role in funding distribution, as managing this responsibility is typically outside of its purview. If the County intends to provide direct financial support to individual jurisdictions, policy actions may be required. Early financial assistance to jurisdictions would empower them to manage resident needs effectively through existing channels to reduce changes in program management as well as the County's burden. Consider streamlining processes by issuing direct payments to each jurisdiction, minimizing complexities associated with multiple housing authorities. Revise contracts to expand authority and control and establish a foundation for direct cash assistance to address community needs more efficiently.

Additionally, enhance education and communication by expanding the understanding of expectations, grants, and agreements to improve readiness and reduce resistance when implementing new programs or responding to emergencies.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Addressing FEMA's Eligibility Concerns:** There was a noted difficulty in addressing and managing FEMA's concerns about verifying applicant eligibility. The challenge was exacerbated by the real-time response, making it hard to reconcile the amount of assistance given with the recipients' eligibility.

### Recommendation

**Enhance Resource Vetting and Efficiency:** Future responses should align better with FEMA's eligibility guidelines and ensure more transparent and upfront communication about eligibility requirements and potential assistance. Improve the County's vetting process to streamline assistance, reduce costs, and avoid additional effort required to verify eligibility after the fact. This may include faster and more cost-effective methods for supporting individuals in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, such as congregate sheltering, allowing vetting to take place, and incorporating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) into the process.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Non-Congregate Sheltering and Data Management:** For future disasters involving non-congregate sheltering, consider if the contracts clearly reflect the County's expectations regarding data collection and reporting. Address inefficiencies caused by unplanned methods of mass care and sheltering and frequent changes in data expectations from the Policy Group.

## Recommendation

**Explicitly Identify Sheltering Needs:** For future disasters involving non-congregate sheltering, establish clear and detailed contracts that define in detail the County's expectations for data collection, reporting, and performance. Ensure that these contracts address potential inefficiencies by incorporating flexible but structured guidelines to manage large-scale sheltering operations. Implement a standardized protocol for data collection and reporting, including regular updates and checkpoints, to accommodate changes in data requirements. Additionally, coordinate closely with the Policy Group to align data reporting expectations to minimize frequent changes and rework. This will help streamline operations, enhance data accuracy, and improve overall response efficiency.

## Public Information Management

Public information management is integral for any emergency response. As part of public information management, the County established a JIC to centralize public information operations. The JIC coordinated with all different response components and the community sectors established by the County.

As in all emergency activations, at the beginning of the response communication personnel worked out of the EOC's designated JIC. That space offered direct access to the area where the Policy Group was located, aiding in quick access to information from decision-makers, key members of the incident command staff, and other experts.

Many JIC respondents noted the positive impact of working closely with their team day to day. This "bullpen" style setup ensured consistency in answers and provided individual Joint Information Center staff with the expertise and knowledge of colleagues. Proximity to SMEs also served as a key resource as the JIC obtained information and crafted messaging, developed marketing material and other collateral, drafted talking points, planned social media, and worked on responses to media and high-profile inquiries. Importantly, this high level of access and invitation to meetings helped mitigate the silo effect that comes naturally with teams taking on various aspects of the response.

County leaders utilized the JIC to relay information to the public through multiple forums. In addition to traditional media and other web pages, the County was able to deliver public messaging across multiple platforms. Experienced staff were made available to the media and spoke to numerous media outlets during the response and recovery efforts. However, the pressure on data professionals for precise and up-to-the-minute data under extreme time constraints, information critical to inform public communications, created challenges in the demands of keeping residents and leaders abreast of the most up-to-date information.



## Strengths

### STRENGTH

**Effective Communication Team Involvement:** The involvement of communication teams in relevant meetings and discussions facilitated smoother operations and better information sharing.

### STRENGTH

**Daily Coordination with Agencies:** Daily briefings with outside agencies, including FEMA and Cal OES, ensured alignment and clarity among all parties, allowing for efficient task delegation.

### STRENGTH

**Flexible Translation Services:** County staff demonstrated flexibility and dedication to serving impacted communities by contributing remotely, ensuring continued support for communication needs.

### STRENGTH

**Crisis Track Dashboard:** The implementation of Crisis Track and a Power BI dashboard, a Microsoft data visualization software product, enhanced the ability to communicate with and collect information directly from the public populations that were impacted.

## Areas for Improvement

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Improve Communication Flow with CBOs:** At times limited, outdated, or inaccurate information was circulating among impacted communities about the disaster, including what was being done, who was responsible for various tasks, funding, and what resources and assistance were available. Clear guidance and information needed to be provided to the communications team to enable proactive messaging and effective public engagement.

### Recommendation

**Enhance Communication Flow and Coordination:** Improve communication about the disaster through better coordination and information sharing with CBO's. Increase the frequency and consistency of press briefings to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information, avoiding missed opportunities to provide detailed updates as the situation evolves. Provide clear guidance and resources to the communications team to enable proactive messaging and effective public engagement, thereby improving overall communication effectiveness.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Understanding Available Resources:** Due to the rarity of the incident, flood victims, CBOs, and other residents were confused about available resources and the overall response and recovery processes. There was also uncertainty about the specific roles of FEMA, the County, and the City

of San Diego, which contributed to a lack of understanding about where to seek assistance, what was available, and what the requirements or implications were. Without clear and accessible information, trust in the system diminished, leaving many unsure of whom to turn to for help.

### Recommendation

**Opportunities for Education:** To improve clarity and trust in an emergency, the County can enhance its public information efforts by developing clear, accessible communication strategies. This can include having dedicated channels for distributing information about resources, the roles of FEMA, the County, and the City of San Diego, and ways to seek assistance. The County may consider conducting media and public outreach assessments to learn more about how the public prefers to receive emergency information and how the County can better utilize traditional and non-traditional media to relay valuable information to the public. Additionally, the County can implement ongoing educational opportunities, such as workshops within the community or online resources, to educate residents, CBOs, and others, about emergency processes and available services. These efforts will help to ensure the public is informed and prepared, building trust for future responses.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Account for Translation Needs:** Stakeholders identified the potential for future improvement noting there may have been some delays and missed opportunities for engagement with non-English speaking audience.

### Recommendation

**Integrate Multilingual Communication and Translation Services:** The County may consider developing a comprehensive plan for multilingual communication to build trust with diverse communities and ensure effective engagement. Incorporate translation services into the approval process to prevent delays and guarantee timely communication for non-English speaking audiences, thereby enhancing inclusivity and accessibility. The County may also consider internal collaboration to enhance language access, outreach, and community engagement to ensure efforts are coordinated and amplified. For example, coordinating messaging and efforts among County platforms (e.g., website, social media, press releases), County outreach and engagement programs, and County staff on the ground in the field with direct contact with disaster survivors and community groups.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Streamline Workflow and Liaison Roles:** Avoid disruptions to workflow caused by shifting liaison roles and focus on maximizing media opportunities without undue concern over group dynamics.

### Recommendation

**Improved Media Relations:** Streamline workflow by stabilizing liaison roles to prevent disruptions and ensure continuity in communication and operations. Focus on optimizing media opportunities

without being overly concerned with group dynamics. This approach will enhance efficiency and effectiveness in managing media relations and maintaining a smooth operational workflow.

## AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Proactive and Accurate Public Communication:** Establish protocols for responding to media inaccuracies and ensure County communications staff can effectively address and correct misinformation.

### Recommendation

**Enhance Frequency and Consistency of Press Briefings:** Increase the frequency and consistency of press briefings to ensure timely dissemination of information. Include proactive public communications by implementing regularly scheduled media briefings and strategies to manage rumors and prevent the spread of misinformation. Leadership can assist by providing clear guidance and information to the communications team to enable proactive messaging and effective public engagement. These measures will ensure the public receives accurate and timely updates, enhancing trust and coordination during emergencies.

## Data Management and Reporting

Data management and reporting are critical components of effective emergency management during and after disasters, serving as the backbone for informed decision-making and resource allocation. Accurate and timely data enables emergency managers to assess the scope of the disaster, prioritize needs, and deploy resources efficiently. However, the dynamic nature of disasters often leads to competing demands and rapidly changing information, creating challenges for workers who must constantly update and reconcile data. Workers were tasked with meeting the needs of various stakeholders, often under tight deadlines, which strained resources. Despite these challenges, robust data management and reporting systems are essential for maintaining situational awareness, ensuring accountability, and providing transparency to the public and other stakeholders.

### Strengths

#### STRENGTH

**Power BI for Information Sharing:** The planning team found an effective solution using Power BI to provide a public information channel to provide the official set of statistics.

#### STRENGTH

**Effective Use of Crisis Track for Damage Assessment:** The implementation of the Crisis Track platform for the public to provide self-reporting and damage reports significantly improved data collection capabilities. This effective use of Crisis Track facilitated accurate initial damage assessments, supported the successful issuance of a Presidential Disaster Declaration, and

contributed to efficient resource allocation by aiding the County, FEMA, and other partners during the incident.

### STRENGTH

**Logistic and Operational Efficiency:** Strong logistical relationships and engagement of the right teams and departments enabled nimble and efficient operations.

### STRENGTH

**Prepared Infrastructure:** The pre-built Microsoft Teams environment with established channels, NIMS/SEMS templates, and documents in file libraries enabled staff to track and manage lodging internally for the County from the onset of the incident.

### STRENGTH

**Robust Mass Notification System:** The mass notification system, integrated with Crisis Track, effectively compiled contact information, and enabled geo-targeted alerts, successfully reaching up to 80,000 residents with important updates and notifications.

## Areas for Improvement

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Manage Data Expectations:** Staff reported challenges related to frequent and overlapping data report requests and constraints to deliver on simultaneous time-sensitive demands for various data reports.

#### Recommendation

**Establish Data Expectations Early:** Early in the emergency response and recovery effort, the County may consider developing and communicating the various data reports that will be needed in the disaster response. Developing guidance can help all parties to understand the data requirements and expectations for managing contracts early in the process, especially for smaller-scale operations. A well-defined chain of command ensures that all requests are routed through appropriate channels to prevent various data requests coming in from multiple channels. Implementing a systematic approach can help to prioritize requests based on their urgency and relevance, rather than their origin. Providing training for staff in effective prioritization techniques and clear communication practices will help to manage requests and expectations.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Improve Data Accuracy and Transparency:** Staff experienced inconsistent data tracking from contractors (e.g., lodging, food), which resulted in service inaccuracies. Task Force leads as well as CBOs faced adversity trying to collect additional data to better serve the community, in turn creating a degree of mistrust among disaster survivors.

### Recommendation

**Establish Information Sharing Mechanisms:** Develop a centralized SharePoint or similar online platform to streamline information sharing, providing timely and accessible updates from the policy group or leadership, including EOC status and critical messages. Implement interactive dashboards and web-based workspaces to create internal reports and disseminate information to the public. Additionally, ensure that the information shared with the public is clear, easily digestible, and presented in a way that is simple to understand. This system will enhance data accessibility, accuracy, and overall emergency response coordination by improving the management and dissemination of emergency information.

### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Data Management:** Currently, the absence of an official database and a routine for updating data results in inefficiencies and potential inaccuracies. Enhanced data management by transitioning from an Excel-based setup to a robust, dedicated database can be more efficient for logging emergency information.

### Recommendation

**Data Structure:** Evaluate alternative databases for logging and managing emergency information. Develop and implement a structured template within the new system to capture essential details such as data requests, dates, responsible individuals, and due dates. Establish a consistent routine for updating data, such as daily updates in the morning, to enhance quality assurance and reporting accuracy. This transition will improve data management, efficiency, and reliability in emergency response operations. Additionally, ensure that team members are trained in and have access to multiple tools and systems to maintain continuity and efficiency in task completion. This approach will mitigate the risk of delays caused by the unavailability of individuals with expertise in specific tools and enhance overall operational resilience.

### Other:

### Recommendation

**Improve Vetting and Reporting of Self-Reported Damage:** Enhance the vetting process for information received by Crisis Track when collecting self-reported damage. Implement more official and standardized reporting methods to ensure accuracy and reliability in the data collected. This will improve the overall quality and trustworthiness of the information used for disaster response and recovery efforts.

### Recommendation

**Support Staff by Centralizing Expertise:** Appoint a compliance officer to provide guidance and support on handling data, particularly new data sets such as those from FEMA. This role should assist staff in understanding and navigating compliance requirements, offering clear instructions on best practices and pitfalls to avoid. By centralizing this expertise, the compliance officer can

help ensure that staff effectively manage and utilize data, improving overall efficiency and adherence to protocols.

## Recovery

Recovery efforts often overlap with response activities in emergency management, creating a continuum that requires careful coordination to ensure both immediate needs and long-term recovery goals are addressed. During a disaster, while response efforts focus on protecting life and property, recovery efforts begin to take shape in parallel aiming to restore the community to its pre-disaster state. This overlap is crucial as it allows for the integration of recovery planning into the response phase, ensuring that actions taken early on support a smoother transition to recovery. In the case of the County, collaboration with various departments was essential in documenting recovery efforts, particularly in securing housing for displaced residents. By working closely together, these departments ensured that recovery plans were aligned with response actions, facilitating a more seamless return to normalcy for affected individuals and reducing the risk of prolonged displacement. This proactive approach underscores the importance of integrating recovery considerations into response efforts, paving the way for a more resilient and effective recovery process.

### Strengths

#### STRENGTH

**Effective Team Engagement:** The right teams and departments were effectively engaged in the effort, with regular interface and collaboration. This ensured that the appropriate individuals were at the table, leading to the creation of nimble operations.

#### STRENGTH

**Strategic Selection of Personnel:** The team was handpicked for their specific skill sets, including training for key tasks. This strategic selection of personnel ensured that the right expertise was available, enhancing the effectiveness of the response efforts.

### Areas for Improvement

#### AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Recovery Preparation and Training:** Recovery operations were not prioritized within Emergency Services, particularly as leadership changed, leading to diminished focus and reduced training on recovery processes. This lack of ongoing emphasis and training in recovery contributed to difficulties in implementing effective recovery actions. EOC personnel, who were more experienced in response operations, struggled with the transition to recovery roles due to their insufficient experience and understanding of recovery processes. This knowledge gap, combined



with a mismatch between the actual needs and prioritized work, hindered the timely and effective establishment of recovery processes.

### **Recommendation**

**Elevate Focus on Recovery and Provide Continued Training:** To address the diminished prioritization of recovery in Emergency Services and the impact of leadership changes, elevate the importance of recovery efforts alongside response activities. Implement long-term recovery planning and ongoing training that emphasize the critical role of recovery to ensure it is executed effectively. This would include training for key EOC positions for at least three trained individuals, to ensure a thorough understanding of roles and responsibilities. This would also ensure that such key personnel would be able to train DSWs should turnover take place. Additionally, coordinate between response and recovery efforts to align with actual needs and enhance overall emergency management effectiveness.

### **AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT**

**Role Confusion and Disconnect:** Stakeholders and staff indicated confusion and conflicting views over who should manage recovery efforts, with OES and the Cities having differing views on responsibility. This led to a disconnection in recovery efforts and an ongoing debate about roles and responsibilities, even down to the community level.

### **Recommendation**

**Establish Distinct Teams:** Establish two different teams within the emergency management structure: one dedicated to recovery and one focused on response. The recovery team could be activated swiftly and operate in parallel alongside emergency response teams. Assign a high-level Recovery Manager (e.g., an executive or an unclassified manager) who has the authority to make necessary decisions during recovery efforts. This individual would be responsible for providing briefings to policymakers to ensure the right policy decisions are being addressed. Clearly define and communicate each team's roles and responsibilities to enhance effective management, coordination, and efficiency.

# Improvement Plan

Recommendations outlined in this AAR are consolidated into an Improvement Plan (IP) to facilitate the implementation and tracking of individual actions. The Improvement Plan accompanying this After-Action Report allows for the assignment of responsibility and leadership. This offers a quick reference for action-oriented recommendations intended to improve capability and future County responses.

The County of San Diego utilized an Improvement Plan Review Team to review recommendations outlined in the Improvement Plan. The County will conduct further review and analysis of the recommended areas of improvement and develop precise action plans to address all recommendations.

This Improvement Plan includes 44 recommendations and provides a roadmap for where the County of San Diego could allocate resources and funding in the short-, intermediate-, and long-term. This plan should be reviewed and updated regularly to adjust priorities based on the County's new and/or changing needs.

Table 5: County of San Diego Winter Storm Flood Response Improvement Plan

| Recommendation and Description   | Functional Area   | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|--|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p>01</p> <p>Apply Lessons Learned from Previous Responses: Ensure that after-action findings (AAFs) from previous responses are reviewed and integrated into current planning and preparation efforts. By applying these insights in advance, the County can improve response effectiveness and address long-standing needs more effectively.</p>   | <p>Operational Area<br/>Emergency Operations Center</p> | <p>County OES</p>            | <p>All County Departments</p>  |
| <p>02</p> <p>Support Leadership and Decision-Making Processes: To the extent feasible, County team members should follow principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), ICS, and California’s Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). This will establish a centralized communication protocol for managing directives from multiple high-level officials and ensure alignment with existing policies and procedures for disaster response, recovery, and potential State and federal aid. The unique nature of a future incident may require the County to clarify who is responsible for which decisions are being made, whether by the Board of Supervisors, CAO, Deputy Chief Administrative Officers (DCAOs), Incident Commander, or EOC leadership to avoid confusion. The County may also consider further encouraging a culture of collaboration and a shared-structured decision-making process that includes vetting of information with input from County SMEs to enhance accuracy and adherence to County policies (similar to day-to-day operations). A more structured chain of command with one point of contact in charge and deputies providing support (e.g., Recovery Manager and Deputy Managers) aids in providing clarity in direction. These recommendations are intended to reduce</p> | <p>Operational Area<br/>Emergency Operations Center</p> | <p>County CAO’s Office</p>   | <p>County OES</p>              |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area   | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|---|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p>confusion and uncoordinated efforts, improve decision-making, and aid in better meeting expectations and service delivery.</p>   |   |                              |                                |
| <p>03</p> <p>Collaboration with Liaisons: The EOC is a place that brings people together with a wide range of professional expertise and skill sets to make the most informed and timely decisions as incidents evolve. To maximize this benefit, County personnel should memorialize the best practices of orienting DSWs and liaisons to the EOC, including representatives that are in close communication with the impacted communities, and including their perspectives during decision-making. It is also important to capture and display the organizational structure at the earliest opportunity to assist with clarity, direction, and identifying potential gaps in representation. Additionally, when sending DSW in response, departments could make it a continued practice to, where possible, re-assign staff that are eager to serve the community in a great time of need, have proven track records of thriving in dynamic work environments, and are a good match for the response/recovery position skillsets that are needed to contribute to the success of the disaster response and recovery efforts.</p> | <p>Operational Area<br/>Emergency Operations<br/>Center</p> | <p>County OES</p>            | <p>County CAO's<br/>Office</p> |
| <p>04</p> <p>Evaluate Response Rate Capacity and Scale Resources: To support response and recovery staff, the County may consider the response rate that is needed to effectively respond to the needs of a community and scale its resources in disaster response and recovery to meet expectations for timelines and service delivery. Communication regarding the resources needed to accomplish tasks within the desired timeframe should continuously occur throughout all levels of the emergency response and recovery operations. Additionally, the County may consider a more formal approach for</p>  | <p>Operational Area<br/>Emergency Operations<br/>Center</p> | <p>County OES</p>            | <p>County CAO's<br/>Office</p> |

| Recommendation and Description   | Functional Area                                 | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary)            |
|--|---|------------------------------|---|
| <p>establishing clear priorities, goals, and objectives to manage tasks and reduce the need for rework. The County may consider introducing a formal vetting process for programmatic or financial decisions, to ensure that the community's needs and interests are being supported as efficiently as possible. The County may also consider staffing resources needed to respond to both the shorter-term emergency and longer-term recovery efforts, to ensure there are two to three staff to support identified response and recovery positions and to assist with the 12/24-hour shift rotations and to ensure staff are taking scheduled breaks and days off while operations maintain continuity. The County may also consider a hybrid schedule to support mental and physical well-being. These considerations may help to maintain employee morale and team efficiency during the extended response recovery efforts.</p> |   |                              |   |
| <p>05 Enhance Direction and Communication When New Policies Are Implemented: The County Board of Supervisors are elected officials who provide policy direction on a wide variety of regional services and unincorporated county municipal programs. The County may consider that when policy direction includes creating and implementing new programs or services, enhanced direction communication will help staff to have more clarity, coordination, and efficiency. Additionally, the County may consider needs for future disasters (e.g., training, contracts, resources) that can be implemented now to support future emergency response and recovery efforts.</p>   | Operational Area<br>Emergency Operations Center | County CAO's Office          |   |
| <p>06 Optimizing EOC Efficiency through Space Management and Training: To enhance the effectiveness of the EOC, DSWs, and other staff, it may serve as beneficial to allocate private workspaces for roles requiring confidentiality, such as legal personnel, ensuring they can perform their critical tasks</p>  | Operational Area<br>Emergency Operations Center | County OES                   | Departments Supporting the EOC with DSW's |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area                                 | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary)            |
|---|---|------------------------------|---|
| <p>without disruption. EOC leadership may consider clearly defining roles and responsibilities for all personnel, especially those less familiar with the environment so that everyone understands their tasks and contributions to the overall mission. Implement an efficient system for task assignments, ensuring that each individual has meaningful work and remains engaged. Comprehensive training and orientation should be provided to familiarize EOC personnel with procedures and expectations, reducing confusion and downtime. Additionally, clarifying the role of the Policy Group to provide clear policy guidance and EOC operations will help to implement the policy direction. Ensure consistent resource allocation, avoid abrupt shifts, and maintain in-person leadership to effectively oversee operations. This approach will help prevent role overlap, reduce confusion, and enhance overall response effectiveness.</p> |   |                              |   |
| <p>07 Pre-Established Funding Allocation: After clarifying policy direction for future disaster response and recovery efforts, develop and implement standardized protocols and pre-negotiated contracts or MOUs with key vendors and community partners that ensure County funds are allocated effectively during an emergency. Strengthening relationships with CBOs and city authorities to improve coordination and resource management (e.g., feeding, non-congregate sheltering, and data collection), particularly in community-driven initiatives.</p>  | Operational Area<br>Emergency Operations Center | County CAO's Office          | County OES and Purchasing and Contracting |
| <p>08 Streamline Decision-Making and Enhance Transparency: To the extent possible, establish and adhere to SOPs to support consistency and efficiency in EOC operations. Implement regular planning meetings to create a structured organizational rhythm. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of task</p>  | Operational Area<br>Emergency Operations Center | County OES                   | County CAO's Office                       |



| Recommendation and Description   | Functional Area                                 | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary)                     |
|--|---|------------------------------|--|
|  |   |                              |  |
| <p>09</p> <p>Jurisdictional Responsibility Management: Encourage jurisdictions with designated responsibilities, such as housing, to manage those responsibilities directly and without transferring between agencies. This approach will prevent costly transitions and ensure that operational costs are minimized and effectively utilized, benefiting the community.</p>   | Operational Area<br>Emergency Operations Center | County OES                   | County OES and all supporting departments          |
| <p>10</p> <p>Regular Training and Drills: Implement regular training and drills for the CAO's Office, County Board of Supervisors staff, all County Executives, and key positions to ensure familiarity with the IC structure, SEMS, NIMS, and emergency response and recovery procedures. Extend training to lower levels to provide backfill capabilities and facilitate smooth transitions in roles due to turnover.</p>  | Operational Area<br>Emergency Operations Center | County OES                   | County CAO's Office and all supporting departments |
| <p>11</p> <p>Consistent Leadership and Real-Time Data Management: Appoint a specific, consistent lead for each group or task force from the beginning of the response. Develop and utilize applications or electronic systems for real-time data collection and transmission to improve data management and reduce delays. Additionally, incorporate people with technology and platform (e.g., Microsoft Office) experience to facilitate different aspects (e.g., quality management, data input, etc.).</p> | Operational Area<br>Emergency Operations Center | County OES                   |  |
| <p>12</p> <p>Pre-Established Call List and Role Clarity: Maintain a pre-established call list of individuals trained in SEMS/NIMS, and EOC position-specific training. Ensure clarity in roles and</p>   | Operational Area<br>Emergency Operations Center | County OES                   | All County departments                             |

| Recommendation and Description   | Functional Area               | Responsible Agency (Primary)                 | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| responsibilities and train staff accordingly to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in emergency response and recovery.   |                               |  |                                |
| <p>13</p> <p>Transparent Contracting: The County may consider conducting a review of the procurement and awarding process to ensure transparency, cost-effectiveness, and alignment with community needs. The County may also consider establishing and implementing clear policy decisions on the County's direction in future response efforts, especially regarding contracted services and responsibilities related to food and shelter. Additionally, ensure that contracts are proactive with clearly defined expectations and capabilities, and include data tracking mechanisms.</p>   | Operational Area Coordination | Purchasing and Contracting                   | County CAO's Office and OES    |
| <p>14</p> <p>DSW Management: To reduce high turnover and improve DSW effectiveness, clarify and re-train on the mandatory and essential nature of DSW assignments. This could include formal training for at least three shifts of all key positions within the EOC to ensure a thorough understanding of their roles and establish a pool of trained staff for backup. Communicate these expectations to all employees and supervisors to ensure that everyone is aligned and understands their responsibilities. Enhance training programs to equip DSWs with necessary skills and provide ongoing support. Additionally, formalize an onboarding process for volunteers and identify a single point of contact within OES, Human Resources, and other departments. This can help to develop a systematic approach for assigning roles, including clear instructions and communication to prevent mismatches. The County may consider regularly monitoring and adjusting the DSW deployment process, incorporating staff feedback to enhance overall efficiency and effectiveness.</p> | Operational Area Coordination | County OES and Department of Human Resources | All County Departments         |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area               | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary)                     |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| <p>15 Enhance ICS Adherence and Leadership Training: To improve response effectiveness and maintain internal coordination, strengthen adherence to the ICS structure. Ensure leaders practice and trust each other by increasing familiarity with emergency management processes and providing basic ICS/SEMS/NIMS training. Additionally, accelerate the development of organizational charts and promptly establish a recovery ICS structure to guide response and recovery efforts. Increase emergency management experience and training for higher County leadership positions to better handle responses beyond normal operations.</p>  | Operational Area Coordination | County OES                   | County CAO's Office and all supporting departments |
| <p>16 Maintain Clear Storm Drains and Culverts: CBO members expressed concerns with debris in storm drains and culverts. Each municipality in the region is responsible for implementing its own public works, capital projects, and stormwater programs. The County is responsible for implementing these programs for the unincorporated areas. The County may consider convening a regional collaboration meeting with local jurisdictions to discuss the condition of the storm drains and culverts in each of their respective locations and share information and best practices on how each jurisdiction's infrastructure is being routinely inspected and maintained, especially before inclement weather. Additionally, jurisdictions may consider including storm drain and culvert projects in their respective Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) and seek external funding, such as the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to support regular maintenance and upgrades.</p> | Operational Area Coordination | Department of Public Works   | County OES   |
| <p>17 Enhance Community and Internal Engagement Strategies: Develop and implement strategies for ongoing community and jurisdictional engagement to build trust and improve relationships before emergencies arise. Strengthen</p>  | Community Engagement          | County OES                   | County Communications Office                       |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area      | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p>collaboration with CBOs by fostering pre-incident relationships and establishing regular communication channels. Ensure CBOs and other stakeholders have meaningful roles in the EOC and involve them in planning and training activities related to Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD)/SD VOAD to facilitate trust-building and effective engagement during incidents.</p> <p>Incorporate a person-centered approach to response and recovery, such as attention to dietary needs, sensitivities, and other individual needs. Develop strategies to inform and refine future response and recovery efforts, ensuring that community engagement practices evolve and meet the needs of diverse populations.</p>  |                      |                              |                                |
| <p>18 Support CBO Training: The County may consider supporting disaster management training for CBOs and local communities. A suggestion is to encourage communities to conduct their own disaster assessments and develop a comprehensive emergency plan. The County can support these efforts by establishing policies that support disaster training for CBOs and community planning groups. The County could also organize workshops and develop tabletop exercises to help communities create their own disaster plans, including key areas of focus such as meeting locations, information dissemination, and other coordination processes.</p> <p>To ensure community preparedness, the County and communities can conduct a gap analysis to identify areas where communities lack essential disaster management capabilities. This analysis can help tailor training programs and</p> | Community Engagement | County OES                   | Purchasing and Contracting     |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area      | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary)        |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| resources. Additionally, the County can provide resources and tools to make sure the community plans are implemented effectively (see Appendix C: Documents). This will overall improve coordination pre-and-post disaster.   |                      |                              |                                       |
| 19 Establish Emergency Response MOUs: The County may consider establishing MOUs with CBOs and service providers to facilitate communication and coordination with the EOC. Incorporate pre-established agreements with service providers (e.g., Uber, Instacart) into the planning, and prepare contract templates to expedite emergency responses. Additionally, pre-plan and develop contracts with approved micro-local businesses to serve as feeding sources or potential resource hubs for future disasters, where appropriate. These agreements can enhance preparedness and ensure timely, coordinated responses. | Community Engagement | County OES                   | Purchasing and Contracting            |
| 20 Address Technology Barriers to Accessing Resources: Implement support systems to assist individuals who may lack technological experience or access. Provide alternative methods for accessing resources, such as phone support and in-person assistance, and offer technology training sessions to improve digital literacy. Communication channels can be used as inclusive and accessible platforms for all community members, regardless of their technological proficiency.   | Community Engagement | County Communications Office | County OES and Information Technology |
| 21 Increase Transparency with Community: Allocate dedicated staff resources to County OES to establish specialized liaison teams. These teams can manage communication and relationships between the County and community organizations, such as those identified as CBOs, COAD, and SD VOAD, ensuring effective collaboration and coordination. This will ensure consistent, transparent communication and timely responses to queries, helping to build and repair trust.   | Community Engagement | County OES                   |                                       |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area             | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary)         |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
|   |                             |                              |  |
| 22<br>Develop a structured approach for sharing information about resources and updates to avoid miscommunication and address historical issues of mistrust. Additionally, create mechanisms for ongoing feedback and collaboration to foster stronger partnerships and improve overall support during emergencies.   | Community Engagement        | County OES                   |  |
| 23<br>Develop Community Network: The County may consider continuing to strengthen relationships with CBOs due to their hands-on role within the community. This can be achieved by developing a cross-collaborative, formal infrastructure of vetted organizations that can be relied upon during future disasters. By building a network, the County can ensure a more efficient and effective response, leveraging the expertise and established presence of CBOs to better meet community needs in an emergency. | Community Engagement        | County OES                   | Purchasing and Contracting             |
| 24<br>CBO MOUs: The County may establish MOUs or otherwise clarify expectations with the CBOs and non-profit organizations involved before the disbursement of funds. This will help prevent miscommunication, reduce confusion, and ensure that non-profit organizations are not being overlooked for potential funding.   | Emergency Temporary Lodging | County OES                   | All supporting departments and offices |



| Recommendation and Description |  | Functional Area             | Responsible Agency (Primary)  | Responsible Agency (Secondary)                          |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 25                             | Improve Implementation and Communication for Emergency Temporary Lodging: Address implementation issues with ETL by enhancing communication and alignment between policy direction and actual practices. Ensure that non-congregate sheltering guidelines are clearly defined and consistently applied. Implement regular reviews and updates to address discrepancies and improve the effectiveness of ETL programs, ensuring they meet the intended objectives and provide adequate support to those in need including the ability to remain in their community and school district if possible. Additionally, coordinate with the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to review scripting and outreach for immigrant households to ensure resources are being extended to vulnerable communities. | Emergency Temporary Lodging | County CAO                    | Purchasing and Contracting with support from County OES |
| 26                             | Continued ETL Program: To address the uncertainty of the ETL program, and to ensure its future effectiveness, the County may explore and vet options for a comprehensive policy decision. This policy could incorporate emergency response best practices and identify clear strategies for resource distribution. By developing and implementing this policy, the County may be better equipped with resources to improve its non-congregate housing options, and to meet future needs.   | Emergency Temporary Lodging | County CAO                    | Purchasing and Contracting with support from County OES |
| 27                             | Clarified Eligibility: Establish clear guidelines and processes to address complex cases and ensure that all eligibility criteria are communicated and applied consistently. This will help streamline operations and provide more effective support for individuals facing unique or special circumstances.   | Emergency Temporary Lodging | County OES                    | Purchasing and Contracting, County Communications       |
| 28                             | Enhanced Cultural Sensitivity Training: To improve communication and service delivery in ETL, provide cultural sensitivity training for all staff and contractors involved. This   | Emergency Temporary Lodging | Department of Human Resources | Purchasing and Contracting                              |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area             | Responsible Agency (Primary)  | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p>training may focus on understanding and respecting diverse cultural norms and practices, ensuring that interactions with individuals from different backgrounds are handled with care and consideration. Additionally, establish guidelines and protocols for culturally appropriate communication and service delivery, and monitor compliance to address any issues promptly. The County may consider working with the Health and Human Services agencies to navigate cultural sensitivities.</p>  |                             |                               |                                |
| <p>29 Address Hotel Costs for Services: The County may consider negotiating and establishing clear agreements with hotels to cover costs associated with using rooms for essential services, such as group therapy, to ensure these services are provided effectively and reach those in need. The County could develop guidelines and funding mechanisms to support these costs and avoid limitations on the effectiveness of support services.</p>  | Emergency Temporary Lodging | Department of Human Resources | Purchasing and Contracting     |
| <p>30 Empower Jurisdictions with Direct Funding and Enhance Communication: The County may consider revisiting policy decisions regarding its role in funding distribution, as managing this responsibility is typically outside of its purview. If the County intends to provide direct financial support to individual jurisdictions, policy actions may be required. Early financial assistance to jurisdictions would empower them to manage resident needs effectively through existing channels to reduce changes in program management as well as the County's burden. Consider streamlining processes by issuing direct payments to each jurisdiction, minimizing complexities associated with multiple housing authorities. Revise contracts to expand authority and control and establish a foundation for direct cash assistance to address community needs more efficiently.</p> | Emergency Temporary Lodging | County CAO's Office           | Purchasing and Contracting     |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area               | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary)  |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| <p>31 Enhance Resource Vetting and Efficiency: Future responses should align better with FEMA's eligibility guidelines and ensure more transparent and upfront communication about eligibility requirements and potential assistance. Improve the County's vetting process to streamline assistance, reduce costs, and avoid additional effort required to verify eligibility after the fact. This may include faster and more cost-effective methods for supporting individuals in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, such as congregate sheltering, allowing vetting to take place, and incorporating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) into the process.</p>   | Emergency Temporary Lodging   | Purchasing and Contracting   | County OES  |
| <p>32 Explicitly Identify Sheltering Needs: For future disasters involving non-congregate sheltering, establish clear and detailed contracts that define in detail the County's expectations for data collection, reporting, and performance. Ensure that these contracts address potential inefficiencies by incorporating flexible but structured guidelines to manage large-scale sheltering operations. Implement a standardized protocol for data collection and reporting, including regular updates and checkpoints, to accommodate changes in data requirements. Additionally, coordinate closely with the Policy Group to align data reporting expectations to minimize frequent changes and rework. This will help streamline operations, enhance data accuracy, and improve overall response efficiency.</p> | Emergency Temporary Lodging   | Purchasing and Contracting   | Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics (OEPA), County CAO's Office and County OEM |
| <p>33 Enhance Communication Flow and Coordination: Improve communication about the disaster through better coordination and information sharing with CBO's. Increase the frequency and consistency of press briefings to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information, avoiding missed opportunities to provide detailed updates as the situation</p>  | Public Information Management | County Communications        | County OES and supporting departments and offices   |

| Recommendation and Description   | Functional Area               | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|  |                               |                              |                                |
| <p>34 evolves. Provide clear guidance and resources to the communications team to enable proactive messaging and effective public engagement, thereby improving overall communication effectiveness.</p> <p>Opportunities for Education: To improve clarity and trust in an emergency, the County can enhance its public information efforts by developing clear, accessible communication strategies. This can include having dedicated channels for distributing information about resources, the roles of FEMA, the County, and the City of San Diego, and ways to seek assistance. The County may consider conducting media and public outreach assessments to learn more about how the public prefers to receive emergency information and how the County can better utilize traditional and non-traditional media to relay valuable information to the public. Additionally, the County can implement ongoing educational opportunities, such as workshops within the community or online resources, to educate residents, CBOs, and others, about emergency processes and available services. These efforts will help to ensure the public is informed and prepared, building trust for future responses.</p> | Public Information Management | County Communications        | County OES                     |
| <p>35 Integrate Multilingual Communication and Translation Services: The County may consider developing a comprehensive plan for multilingual communication to build trust with diverse communities and ensure effective engagement. Incorporate translation services into the approval process to prevent delays and guarantee timely communication for non-English speaking audiences, thereby enhancing inclusivity and accessibility. The County may also consider internal collaboration to enhance language access, outreach, and community engagement to ensure efforts are</p>   | Public Information Management | County Communications        |                                |

| Recommendation and Description   | Functional Area               | Responsible Agency (Primary)                     | Responsible Agency (Secondary)                   |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--|
|  |                               |  |  |
| <p>36 coordinated and amplified. For example, coordinating messaging and efforts among County platforms (e.g., website, social media, press releases), County outreach and engagement programs, and County staff on the ground in the field with direct contact with disaster survivors and community groups.</p> <p>Improved Media Relations: Streamline workflow by stabilizing liaison roles to prevent disruptions and ensure continuity in communication and operations. Focus on optimizing media opportunities without being overly concerned with group dynamics. This approach will enhance efficiency and effectiveness in managing media relations and maintaining a smooth operational workflow.</p> | Public Information Management | County Communications                            |  |
| <p>37 Enhance Frequency and Consistency of Press Briefings: Increase the frequency and consistency of press briefings to ensure timely dissemination of information. Include proactive public communications by implementing regularly scheduled media briefings and strategies to manage rumors and prevent the spread of misinformation. Leadership can assist by providing clear guidance and information to the communications team to enable proactive messaging and effective public engagement. These measures will ensure the public receives accurate and timely updates, enhancing trust and coordination during emergencies.</p>  | Public Information Management | County Communications                            | County CAO's Office                              |
| <p>38 Establish Data Expectations Early: Early in the emergency response and recovery effort, the County may consider developing and communicating the various data reports that will be needed in the disaster response. Developing guidance can help all parties to understand the data requirements and expectations for managing contracts early in the process, especially for smaller-scale operations. A well-defined chain of</p>  | Data Management and Reporting | Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics | County OES and supporting departments or offices |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area               | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p>command ensures that all requests are routed through appropriate channels to prevent various data requests coming in from multiple channels. Implementing a systematic approach can help to prioritize requests based on their urgency and relevance, rather than their origin. Providing training for staff in effective prioritization techniques and clear communication practices will help to manage requests and expectations.</p>   |                               |                              |                                |
| <p>39 Establish Information Sharing Mechanisms: Develop a centralized SharePoint or similar online platform to streamline information sharing, providing timely and accessible updates from the policy group or leadership, including EOC status and critical messages. Implement interactive dashboards and web-based workspaces to create internal reports and disseminate information to the public. Additionally, ensure that the information shared with the public is clear, easily digestible, and presented in a way that is simple to understand. This system will enhance data accessibility, accuracy, and overall emergency response coordination by improving the management and dissemination of emergency information.</p> | Data Management and Reporting | Technology Office            | County OES                     |
| <p>40 Data Structure: Evaluate alternative databases for logging and managing emergency information. Develop and implement a structured template within the new system to capture essential details such as data requests, dates, responsible individuals, and due dates. Establish a consistent routine for updating data, such as daily updates in the morning, to enhance quality assurance and reporting accuracy. This transition will improve data management, efficiency, and reliability in emergency response operations. Additionally, ensure that team members are trained in and have access to multiple tools and systems to maintain continuity and efficiency in task completion. This</p>                                 | Data Management and Reporting | Technology Office            | County OES                     |



| Recommendation and Description   | Functional Area               | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|  |                               |                              |                                |
| <p>approach will mitigate the risk of delays caused by the unavailability of individuals with expertise in specific tools and enhance overall operational resilience.</p> <p>41 Improve Vetting and Reporting of Self-Reported Damage: Enhance the vetting process for information received by Crisis Track when collecting self-reported damage. Implement more official and standardized reporting methods to ensure accuracy and reliability in the data collected. This will improve the overall quality and trustworthiness of the information used for disaster response and recovery efforts.</p>   | Data Management and Reporting | County OES                   | General Services               |
| <p>42 Support Staff by Centralizing Expertise: Appoint a compliance officer to provide guidance and support on handling data, particularly new data sets such as those from FEMA. This role should assist staff in understanding and navigating compliance requirements, offering clear instructions on best practices and pitfalls to avoid. By centralizing this expertise, the compliance officer can help ensure that staff effectively manage and utilize data, improving overall efficiency and adherence to protocols.</p>  | Data Management and Reporting | County OES                   | Purchasing and Contracting     |
| <p>43 Elevate Focus on Recovery and Provide Continued Training: To address the diminished prioritization of recovery in Emergency Services and the impact of leadership changes, elevate the importance of recovery efforts alongside response activities. Implement long-term recovery planning and ongoing training that emphasize the critical role of recovery to ensure it is executed effectively. This would include training for key EOC positions for at least three trained individuals, to ensure a thorough understanding of roles and responsibilities. This would also ensure that such key personnel would be able to train DSWs should turnover take place. Additionally, coordinate between response and recovery efforts to align with</p> | Recovery                      | County OES                   | County CAO's Office            |

| Recommendation and Description  | Functional Area | Responsible Agency (Primary) | Responsible Agency (Secondary) |
|---|-----------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| actual needs and enhance overall emergency management effectiveness.  |                 |                              |                                |
| 44 Establish Distinct Teams: Establish two different teams within the emergency management structure: one dedicated to recovery and one focused on response. The recovery team could be activated swiftly and operate in parallel alongside emergency response teams. Assign a high-level Recovery Manager (e.g., an executive or an unclassified manager) who has the authority to make necessary decisions during recovery efforts. This individual would be responsible for providing briefings to policymakers to ensure the right policy decisions are being addressed. Clearly define and communicate each team's roles and responsibilities to enhance effective management, coordination, and efficiency. | Recovery        | County OES                   |                                |

\* The County Office of Performance Evaluation and Analytics will be in direct support of the responsible agencies for recommendations related to the Data Reporting Functional Area

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Los Angeles, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous high-rise buildings and a multi-lane highway in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey filter. The word "Appendices" is centered in a large, white, sans-serif font.

# Appendices

# Appendix A: Acronyms

| Acronym  | Definition  |
|----------|---|
| AAF      | After-Action Findings                                 |
| AAR      | After-Action Report                                   |
| ACL      | Access and Crisis line                                |
| AFI      | Areas for Improvement                                 |
| AFN      | Access and Functional Needs                           |
| ARC      | American Red Cross                                    |
| BHS      | Behavioral Health Services                            |
| BRC      | Business Recovery Center                              |
| Cal FIRE | California Department of Forestry and Fire protection |
| Cal OES  | California Governor's Office of Emergency Services    |
| CAO      | Chief Administrative Officer                          |
| CBO      | Community Based Organizations                         |
| CDA      | California Disaster Assistance Act                    |
| CDPH     | California Department of Public Health                |
| CEO      | Chief Executive Officer                               |
| CERT     | Community Emergency Response Team                     |
| COAD     | Community Organizations Active in Disasters           |
| COO      | Chief Operating Officer                               |
| DCAO     | Deputy Chief Administrative Officer                   |
| DEHQ     | Department of Environmental Health and Quality        |

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>DPC</b>    | Department of Purchasing and Contracting                   |
| <b>DRC</b>    | Disaster Recovery Centers                                  |
| <b>DSA</b>    | Disaster Survivor Assistance                               |
| <b>D-SNAP</b> | Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program         |
| <b>DSW</b>    | Disaster Service Workers                                   |
| <b>EAP</b>    | Employee Assistance Program                                |
| <b>EBT</b>    | Electronic Benefit Transfer                                |
| <b>EOC</b>    | Emergency Operations Center                                |
| <b>EPA</b>    | Environmental Protection Agency                            |
| <b>ETL</b>    | Emergency Temporary Lodging                                |
| <b>FEMA</b>   | Federal Emergency Management Agency                        |
| <b>GIS</b>    | Geographic Information Systems                             |
| <b>HMGP</b>   | Hazard Mitigation Grant Program                            |
| <b>HSEC</b>   | Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities |
| <b>IA</b>     | Individual Assistance                                      |
| <b>ICS</b>    | Incident Command System                                    |
| <b>IP</b>     | Improvement Plan   |
| <b>IT</b>     | Information Technology                                     |
| <b>JHAT</b>   | Joint Hazard Assessment Team                               |
| <b>JIC</b>    | Joint Information Center                                   |
| <b>JIREH</b>  | Joint Initiatives for Racial Equity in Health              |
| <b>JIS</b>    | Joint Information System                                   |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>LAC</b>       | Local Assistance Center                              |
| <b>LEA</b>       | Local Enforcement Agency                             |
| <b>MOA</b>       | Memorandum of Agreement                              |
| <b>MOU</b>       | Memorandum of Understanding                          |
| <b>NDRF</b>      | National Disaster Recovery Framework                 |
| <b>NGO</b>       | Non-Governmental Organizations                       |
| <b>NIMS</b>      | National Incident Management System                  |
| <b>OA</b>        | Operational Area                                     |
| <b>OAEOC</b>     | Operational Area Emergency Operations Center         |
| <b>OAROC</b>     | Operational Area Recovery Operations Center          |
| <b>OEPA</b>      | Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics     |
| <b>OES</b>       | Office of Emergency Services                         |
| <b>PDS</b>       | Planning & Development Services                      |
| <b>PHPR</b>      | Public Health Preparedness and Response              |
| <b>PIO</b>       | Public Information Officers                          |
| <b>PPE</b>       | Personal Protective Equipment                        |
| <b>ROC</b>       | Recovery Operations Center                           |
| <b>SBA</b>       | Small Business Association                           |
| <b>SD VOAD</b>   | San Diego Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster |
| <b>SDCOE</b>     | San Diego County Office of Education                 |
| <b>SDG&amp;E</b> | San Diego Gas and Electric                           |
| <b>SDHC</b>      | San Diego Housing Commission                         |



|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>SDSU</b>  | San Diego State University                |
| <b>SEMS</b>  | Standardized Emergency Management System  |
| <b>SME</b>   | Subject Matter Expert                     |
| <b>SNAP</b>  | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program |
| <b>SOP</b>   | Standard Operating Procedures             |
| <b>SSGP</b>  | State Supplemental Grant Program          |
| <b>TDG</b>   | Transition Determine Group                |
| <b>TNT</b>   | Transition Notification Team              |
| <b>UMCOR</b> | United Methodist Committee on Relief      |

# Appendix B: Glossary of Common Terminology

| Terminology                 | Definition  |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 211 San Diego               | 2-1-1 San Diego's service includes substance abuse treatment, care for children or aging parents, reporting graffiti, food assistance, and housing and financial assistance. Information is available 24/7 through a stigma-free, confidential phone service and a searchable online database at <a href="http://www.211sandiego.org">www.211sandiego.org</a> . |
| After-Action Review         | An after-action review is a qualitative and quantitative review of actions taken in response to a critical action review. The purpose of an after-action review is to analyze the management of or response to an incident, exercise, or event by identifying strengths to be maintained and built upon and potential areas of improvement.                     |
| Continuity of Government    | Continuity of Government is a coordinated effort within each executive, legislative, and judicial branch to ensure that governance and essential functions continue to be performed before, during, and after an emergency.   |
| Continuity of Operations    | Continuity of Operations is an effort within individual departments and agencies to ensure that Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs) continue to be performed during various emergencies, including localized acts of nature, accidents, and technological or attack-related emergencies.  |
| Emergency Operations Center | An Emergency Operations Center is a physical or virtual location from which leaders of a jurisdiction or organization coordinate information and resources to support incident management activities (on-scene operations).   |
| Incident Command System     | The Incident Command System is a widely applicable management system designed to enable effective, efficient incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure.   |
| Improvement Plan            | An Improvement Plan is a document that includes a consolidated list of corrective actions, responsible parties, and a timeline for completion. This plan identifies actions that government entities and stakeholders will take to increase emergency preparedness and improve response capabilities in the future.   |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Operational Area           | The County of San Diego Operational Area was formed in the 1960s to assist all the cities and the County in developing emergency plans, exercising those plans, developing Mutual Aid capabilities between jurisdictions, and, generally, establishing relationships that would improve communications between jurisdictions and agencies. The OA consists of the County and all jurisdictions within the county. |
| Public Information Officer | Public Information Officers are the communications coordinators or spokespersons of certain governmental organizations. The primary responsibility of a PIO is to provide information to the media and public as required by law and according to the standards of their profession.  |

# Appendix C: Documents

The following appendix represents some of the key documents reviewed by Hagerty for the After-Action Report assessment phase, which are linked, respectively. They are included in this report as an appendix to provide additional detail. Documents include:

- » [County of San Diego, Chief Administrative Office, STRENGTHENING OUR REGIONAL CAPABILITIES IN THE FOUR PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT REPORT BACK](#)
- » [County of San Diego, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, STRENGTHENING OUR REGIONAL CAPABILITIES IN THE FOUR PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT REPORT BACK ANALYSIS](#)
- » [Board of Supervisors Minute Order No. 22. COMMUNITY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY: STRENGTHENING OUR REGIONAL CAPABILITIES IN THE FOUR PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT](#)