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**PROCLAMATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF A COUNTY-WIDE LOCAL EMERGENCY
(UNINCORPORATED AND INCORPORATED AREAS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY) FOR THE
PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR EQUITABLE RESPONSE TO, AND RECOVERY
FROM ANTICIPATED IMPACTS FROM THE DEVELOPING 2026-2027 EL NIÑO, WITH
PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO VULNERABLE AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES**

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center (“CPC”) has identified developing El Niño conditions in the tropical Pacific Ocean that, as of September 21, 2026, are continuing to strengthen, with a greater than 90% chance of a very strong event in the Northern Hemisphere’s fall and winter of 2026-2027; and

WHEREAS, as of September 10, 2026, the CPC’s official El Niño/Southern Oscillation (“ENSO”) outlook indicates that during the October-December 2026 season there is a 75% chance of a historic event that would exceed the strength of previous El Niño events dating back to 1950 and that El Niño is expected to persist through March-May 2027; and

WHEREAS, such a historic event could bring significantly above-average precipitation with increased storm intensity and an elevated risk of flooding, landslides, debris flows, and coastal erosion to San Diego County; and

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2024, a storm system stalled over San Diego County and produced the heaviest rainfall in a single day in more than one hundred years, leaving behind significant damage caused by widespread flooding, experienced most acutely in the Southeast Planning Area of Sherman Heights, Logan Heights, Grant Hill, Memorial, Stockton, Mount Home, Mountain View, Southcrest, Shelltown, and the unincorporated community of Spring Valley; and

WHEREAS, additional low-lying areas could be prone to flooding including areas in the Tijuana River Valley where the County takes regular and ongoing action to remove sediment and debris to minimize any impacts and protect public safety, property, and public health; and

WHEREAS, the January 2024 storm resulted in more than 200 rescues, damage to more than 800 homes, multiple confirmed fatalities, and the temporary sheltering of hundreds of residents, with the most significant impacts primarily concentrated in historically underserved communities; and

WHEREAS, the January 2024 event demonstrated that extreme weather in San Diego County can develop within a matter of hours with limited advance warning, reinforcing the necessity of pre-positioning resources and making sure residents know what to do before conditions turn dangerous; and

WHEREAS, ensuring that all residents, including those who speak languages other than English, and those who are unhoused, older adults, or disabled, have timely access to preparedness information, shelter locations, and emergency alerts is essential to protecting life and safety; and

WHEREAS, effective emergency response requires the coordinated advance action of multiple County departments, including but not limited to Emergency Services, Public Works, the Sheriff's Office, Public Health Services, Behavioral Health Services, Animal Services, and County Fire/CAL FIRE; and

WHEREAS, the County's Emergency Operations Center and Emergency Operations Plan provide the organizational structure necessary to coordinate personnel, equipment, and communications across departments and partner agencies in preparation for and response to anticipated storm impacts; and

WHEREAS, timely procurement of sandbags, pumps, flood-fighting materials, temporary barriers, generators, and other emergency supplies and services is necessary to ensure adequate resources are staged and available before this El Niño season's impacts arrive, and normal competitive procurement and contracting procedures may delay the acquisition of such critical resources when time is of the essence; and

WHEREAS, once El Niño-related impacts begin, the County may need to procure additional emergency supplies, equipment, contracted services, and specialized resources, including debris removal, emergency repairs to public infrastructure, temporary housing, food, and sheltering support, and other response and recovery services, on an expedited basis to protect life and property and to restore essential services, and delays associated with standard competitive procurement and contracting procedures could hinder the County's ability to respond effectively; and

WHEREAS, community-based organizations, faith institutions, and other trusted local and Tribal partners play an essential role in reaching residents, including those who are unhoused, older adults, disabled, and limited-English-proficient populations, who may not otherwise receive or act on official emergency communications, and the County intends to coordinate with these organizations so that every resident, regardless of language or circumstance, gets the same warnings and supports; and

WHEREAS, local businesses, particularly small businesses in flood-prone commercial corridors, benefit from advance coordination with the County on flood mitigation guidance, continuity planning, and available resources, and the County intends to engage chambers of commerce, business improvement districts, and other business associations to reduce potential economic disruption; and

WHEREAS, the County must be prepared to issue timely advisories recommending that residents avoid unnecessary travel, remain sheltered at home, or evacuate as conditions warrant, based on real-time weather forecasting and field conditions reported by first responders; and

WHEREAS, the County, the County Office of Education, and school districts must be prepared to make timely decisions regarding school closures, delayed openings, or remote instruction in response to hazardous travel conditions, flooding, or power outages, and coordination between the County, the County Office of Education and local school districts before conditions arrive will help protect student and staff safety while minimizing disruption to instruction; and

WHEREAS, on September 21, 2026, Governor Gavin Newsom proclaimed a state of emergency in anticipation of the developing El Niño, directing State agencies to begin preparing critical infrastructure, staging emergency supplies, and supporting local partners in reducing flood, landslide, and coastal risk; and

WHEREAS, early proclamation of a local emergency will facilitate the County's ability to request technical assistance, resource pre-positioning, and coordination support from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services and other State agencies in advance of anticipated impacts, consistent with the Governor's own anticipatory proclamation; and

WHEREAS, the California Emergency Services Act, including, but not limited to, Government Code section 8630 and the County of San Diego Emergency Services Organization ordinance (Code of Regulatory Ordinances, sections 31.101 et seq.) empower the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego, as Director of Emergency Services, to proclaim the existence or threatened existence of a local emergency when said county is affected or likely to be affected by a public calamity and the Board of Supervisors is not in session; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego, as Director of Emergency Services, does hereby find that the demonstrated potential for a very strong or historic-strength El Niño event to cause elevated coastal water levels and high-impact storms in San Diego County warrants early, coordinated, and targeted preparedness actions to protect residents, critical infrastructure, agricultural lands, natural resources, and the region's economy; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego, as Director of Emergency Services, does hereby find that conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist within San Diego County due to the developing El Niño event; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego, as Director of Emergency Services, does hereby find that the developing El Niño may bring intense storms, elevated coastal water levels, and changing atmospheric conditions that may produce flooding, mudslides, debris flows, coastal erosion, and other extreme conditions that could result in civilian injuries, road closures, and extensive damage to both public and private infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego, as Director of Emergency Services, finds that conditions arising from the developing 2026-2027 El Niño are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of the County of San Diego; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Diego is not in session and cannot immediately be called into session; and

WHEREAS, this Proclamation of Local Emergency will be ratified by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to law.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY PROCLAIMED AND ORDERED by the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of San Diego as Director of Emergency Services:

1. That a local emergency exists throughout San Diego County pursuant to Government Code section 8630 and as defined by Government Code section 8558 and shall be deemed to continue to exist subject to ratification, review and termination by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Government Code section 8630.
2. That during the existence of said local emergency the powers, functions, and duties of the emergency organization of this county shall be those prescribed by State law including but not limited to Government Code section 8634, County ordinances and resolutions, and the current Emergency Services Agreement and Operational Area Emergency Plan.
3. That a copy of this Proclamation be forwarded to the Director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services ("Director Cal OES") requesting that the Director Cal OES find this Proclamation acceptable in accordance with State law and forward this Proclamation to the Governor of the State of California for consideration and action on San Diego County's requests that:
 - 3.1. The Governor suspend those statutes, regulations, rules and orders that may hinder response and recovery efforts.
 - 3.2. The Governor order that recovery assistance be made available to San Diego County under the California Disaster Assistance Act.
 - 3.3. The Governor order that the State expedite access to Federal resources and any other appropriate federal disaster relief programs for San Diego County.
 - 3.4. The Governor request a Presidential Declaration of a Major Disaster for San Diego County and that the President award any and all appropriate Federal assistance.
4. That the Director of the County Office of Emergency Services shall continue to assess the local emergency and, as emergency planning, preparation, response and recovery efforts warrant, send to Director Cal OES any additional requests that the Governor suspend further statutes, rules and regulations pursuant to Gov Code sec 8571, and that State and Federal assistance be provided to San Diego County.
5. That Ebony N. Shelton, Chief Administrative Officer, or her representative is hereby designated as the authorized representative of the County of San Diego for the purpose of receipt, processing, and coordination of all inquiries and requirements necessary to obtain available State and federal assistance.
6. That all County departments are hereby directed to coordinate with the Office of Emergency Services to identify and pre-position personnel, equipment, and resources necessary to respond to anticipated flooding, landslides, debris flows, coastal erosion, and other impacts of the developing El Niño, consistent with the County's Emergency Operations Plan, and every public employee's duty as a Disaster Service Worker.
7. That the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting is hereby authorized to exercise emergency procurement authority pursuant to the San Diego County Code of Administrative

Ordinances, Section 402, and Board of Supervisors Policy A-87 to acquire, without regard to standard competitive procurement procedures, such supplies, equipment, materials, and services as are necessary to prepare for and respond to anticipated impacts of the developing El Niño.

8. That the Department of General Services is hereby directed to assess and address facility-related needs arising at County-owned or County-operated buildings and facilities as El Niño conditions develop and arrive and to ensure fleet vehicles and equipment are prepared and available to support response operations.
9. That the Director, Department of General Services is hereby authorized to declare a building emergency for any County-owned or County-operated facility when conditions arising from anticipated storm impacts warrant expedited action to correct or mitigate a facility-related problem.
10. That the Department of Public Works is hereby directed to inspect, clean, and clear County-owned or maintained stormwater infrastructure, including storm drains, channels, culverts, and detention basins, throughout the County's unincorporated areas in advance of anticipated storm impacts, and to prioritize known high-risk locations and areas that have experienced prior flooding.
11. That the Department of Public Works is hereby directed to identify and address, to the extent feasible before the onset of anticipated storm impacts, any deficiencies in stormwater infrastructure capacity, and to coordinate with incorporated cities and other local agencies on stormwater systems that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
12. That the Department of Animal Services is hereby directed to ensure readiness for the evacuation, transport, and co-sheltering of pets and livestock in advance of and during anticipated El Niño impacts, including coordination with shelter sites to accommodate residents with animals.
13. That Behavioral Health Services is hereby directed to ensure crisis support and behavioral health resources are available to impacted residents throughout the El Niño season.
14. That the Office of Emergency Services is hereby directed to ensure readiness to stand up sheltering programs and food distribution to support residents in the event that El Niño-related impacts require such services.
15. That the Office of Emergency Services, in coordination with the County Communications Office and Health and Human Services Agency (“HHSA”), is hereby directed to conduct proactive, multilingual public outreach to inform residents of anticipated risks and available resources as this El Niño season develops.
16. That the Office of Emergency Services, in coordination with HHSA, is hereby directed to coordinate with community-based organizations, faith institutions, and other trusted local partners to extend the reach of County preparedness messaging to unhoused, older adults, disabled, limited-English-proficient, and other vulnerable populations.

17. That the Office of Emergency Services, in coordination with the Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs, is hereby directed to engage chambers of commerce, business improvement districts, and other business associations to communicate flood mitigation guidance and continuity planning resources to local businesses as El Niño conditions develop.
18. That the Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs, in coordination with the Office of Emergency Services, is hereby directed to activate the County's City/Government Coordination Sector, to convene City Managers, Executive Directors, and other senior government staff from the region's cities, special districts, and other governmental agencies for the purpose of facilitating bi-directional coordination, information-sharing, and joint problem-solving in advance of and during anticipated storm impacts.
19. That the Office of Emergency Services is hereby directed to coordinate with County Office of Education and local school districts within the region regarding potential school closures, delayed openings, remote instruction, and the potential use of school facilities as shelters.
20. That the Office of Emergency Services is hereby authorized to issue public advisories recommending that residents avoid unnecessary travel and shelter in place when conditions warrant, based on real-time weather forecasting and field conditions reported by first responders.
21. That the County's Emergency Operations Center may be activated, at the discretion of the Director of the County's Office of Emergency Services, at such staffing level as conditions warrant to make sure the County can act quickly and respond to the community's needs as conditions develop.

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

By: 

EBONY N. SHELTON
Chief Administrative Officer and
Director of Emergency Services

Date: September 30, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY

DAMON M. BROWN, County Counsel
By: Mark Day, Supervising Deputy County Counsel