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A message from the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors to Residents and Property Owners

Following the Grand Prix and Old Fires, San Bernardino County officials and staff and those from local cities have been tirelessly working to prepare for and inform the public of the potential for mud and debris flows that inevitably accompany the winter rains when hillsides are denuded of vegetation. The flash floods on Christmas day served as a tragic example of what can occur. Despite countless news articles, broadcasts, and flash flood warnings, people were caught in the path of dangerous mud and debris flows in several locations along the burnt foothills and downstream areas. Some victims tragically lost their lives. History has demonstrated that this type of event can happen repeatedly following fires. Areas spared from flows on Christmas Day could likely experience similar or more severe flows and flash floods accompanying storms. Scorched mountain and hillside slopes can be made more unstable with each passing storm.

No one can accurately predict the precise location and intensity of approaching rain. When rain gauges placed throughout the County measure heavy rainfall, the runoff from that rain is already occurring, often with devastating consequences. Storm runoff occurs immediately and flash floods can result without adequate time to respond or retreat. Flash floods and mud flows can occur anywhere, but are more likely to occur in existing watercourses, canyons, foothill, and low lying areas. Areas adjacent to the burn areas are especially susceptible. The burn areas in our County stretch more than 32 miles from the Los Angeles County line to the Seven Oaks Dam in the Mentone area. Many mountain communities and areas in the High Desert near Hesperia can also be affected.

Many flood control basins and channels are filled with mud and debris and are currently undergoing a massive clearing operation in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This activity will be continuing though the storm season. These mud filled basins are posted "No Trespassing". Take the warning seriously by ensuring that you and your family members stay away from these areas. It is possible for an adult or child to become trapped in the mud and debris by venturing onto what may appear to be stable soil. This quicksand-type hazard may be present in other areas not as clearly marked as the Flood Control facilities. Even a small muddy natural pond can be a fatal trap.

The worst is likely not over. Mud, debris, and flash floods are potentials with every storm. All citizens should be prepared. Even areas that remain unaffected directly may be cutoff from access and communications due to road flooding and damages and utility outages. It is far better to be prepared by personally protecting your property with sandbags and other protective measures, stocking emergency food and medical supplies, preparing for power and communication alternatives, monitoring and heeding storm and flash flood warnings, refraining from entering hazardous areas when possible, conducting family discussions about the hazards, and following a family evacuation plan.

It is estimated that it will take three to five years for this threat to diminish and the foothills to recover from the effects of the fire. Prior to the events on Christmas Day, many thought that it could not happen to them or that they were in safe areas despite the warnings to the contrary. Areas depicted on the recent maps prepared by FEMA as being free from risk experienced mud and flood flows due to fire debris clogging watercourses and redirecting flows. Landlords should pass this information to their tenants. This was a vivid demonstration that the path of mud and debris flows can be unpredictable. Information on protective measures you can take can be obtained on the County's web site www.sbcounty.gov or by contacting the Department of Public Works at (909) 387-7914. Be aware...Be prepared!

URGENTE: NOTICIA DE EMERGENCIA DE INUNDACIÓN

Un mensaje de la Junta de Supervisores del Condado de San Bernardino a los Residentes y Dueños de Propiedades

Para información en español llame a Marie Ramirez (909) 387-7917



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URGENT FLOOD EMERGENCY NOTICE