There’s a saying, “Plan for the worst, hope for the best.” In emergency management, we are accustomed to planning for worst-case scenarios. Every day, we ask things like, how likely a catastrophe is to happen, how big and bad it could get and how much damage it could do. We take stock of what resources we have in place to lessen potential impacts, and we plan for how to maintain our region’s essential functions. We figure out how we will recover.

We ask these questions about a variety of potential hazards, but right now our efforts are particularly focused on potential flooding associated with the forecasted El Niño and future actions related to the ongoing drought. Yes, we are simultaneously planning for too much rain (at one time) and a complete absence of rain. And as we remember, fall Santa Ana winds always increase the possibility of destructive wildfires.

Now is a good time to evaluate your risks, including when it comes to flooding, both at home and at your place of business. If your structure is built on or near a slope, if the structure backs up to a hillside, or if you live or work near property scarred by a recent fire you may be particularly susceptible to debris flows and flooding. There are several simple, fairly inexpensive ways to divert water, sediment, and rocks away from your home or business. You’ll want to coordinate with your neighbors and thoughtfully consider the best erosion control measures. A variety of information and resources are available through our Flooding Preparedness Web page.

You can also look up your flood risk by viewing flood-hazard maps at FEMA’s Flood Map Service Center or enter your address into the National Flood Insurance Program.

September is National Preparedness Month and it’s a good time to remind your family members, colleagues and friends that simple actions like these below can go a long way in keeping you safe no matter what the disaster:

Know your risk: Enter your address into California Emergency Management Agency’s Hazard Mitigation Portal to get a “hyper local” look at the hazards right in your neighborhood.

Make a plan: Complete this Family Disaster Plan and Personal Survival Guide and you and your family will be well on your way to disaster readiness.

Be Informed: Register your mobile phone with AlertSanDiego, the region’s mass notification system, so that law enforcement, fire and emergency personnel can reach you when it’s time to evacuate or stay in place.

Also, download the County’s no-cost SD Emergency application to receive updates on your Apple or Android device during regional disasters – even when the power is out!

Get involved: please consider joining one of the more than 30 Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in San Diego County. These volunteer teams receive all-risk, all-hazard training, as part of a valuable course designed to help you protect yourself, your family, your neighbors, and your neighborhood in an emergency situation.

Taking these steps will help us weather whatever does come our way. Please let us know if there’s anything further we can do to help.
Imagine you are flipping the channels on television and you recognize your neighborhood on the news. A fire or law enforcement official is warning residents of an approaching wildfire. Now imagine you don’t speak English very well. You think you can pick out some words like “evacuation,” but otherwise you can’t tell how close the fire is to you or if you are being asked to go now or to just be prepared to evacuate.

According to the United States Census, more than 1 million Hispanics reside in San Diego County. If you are one of the approximately 350,000 people who only speak Spanish in San Diego County, you can now go to the County’s new, free Spanish SD Emergency App or website for emergency information in Spanish. The new app and website were just launched by the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services. The new offerings mirror the County’s successful English-version app, which has been downloaded 170,000 times, and the SDCountyEmergency.com site which was viewed 2.4 million times during the May 2014 Wildfires.

“This is something I’ve been actively pursuing because we want to reach as many people as possible in an emergency,” said County Supervisor Greg Cox. “These critical, new services will get life-saving information to a large segment of the County’s population.”

The new, accompanying Spanish language versions of ReadySanDiego, SDCountyEmergency and the SDCountyRecovery websites are also available at ListoSanDiego.org and offer the same preparedness tips and recovery resources as the English sites. The Spanish SD Emergency app can be downloaded from the Apple or Google Play stores at no cost via links on ListoSanDiego.org. Just choose between English or Spanish when first opening the app. The language can also be changed at any time through the app's settings. During regional emergencies or potential large scale disasters, the County’s Emergency Operations Center will send messages to the site and app with critical information pertaining to the emergency incident, including evacuation routes, shelter information and major road closures.

The Office of Emergency Services has also upgraded its SDCountyEmergency website and app to benefit hearing and vision impaired residents. Emergency messages are available in American Sign Language in video accompanied by audio and the English and Spanish versions of the app offer customizable text size.

Future upgrades to the SD Emergency app are expected as we continue to improve the app. If your smartphone isn’t set to automatically receive app upgrades, remember to check periodically to make sure you have the latest version.

“We want all residents to have the information they need to make good decisions in an emergency situation and we think this is especially important today due to the historic drought and the potentially dangerous fire season,” said Holly Crawford, director of the County Office of Emergency Services.
Is Your Business Insurance Coverage Adequate?

“At least 25 percent of businesses that close after events, like a flood, never reopen,” according to the California Department of Insurance (CDI). “From 2010 to 2014, the average commercial flood claim amounted to nearly $89,000.”

The San Diego region had a substantial rainfall event last month, with a deluge over the weekend of July 17-19. The intensity and duration of the rainfall caused flooding in various areas, most significantly in the community of Ramona. While residential properties suffered the most damage, some small businesses in the area also were left with cleanup and repair needs.

“It’s a mistake to think the government will bail you out,” says Nancy Kincaid, CDI Press Secretary. “It isn’t the government’s job.” What’s more, government assistance may only come in the form of a low-interest loan if you qualify. Those who qualify for and receive this assistance will then have to pay it back.

The best thing that businesses and residents can do to ensure you will be able to rebuild and/or recover is to make sure that you have adequate insurance.

If you are a small business owner, Kincaid says there are three crucial things you need to do to better prepare your organization for a disaster:

♦ Understand the coverage you have.
♦ Understand the risks you face.
♦ Understand your tolerance for risk.

To better understand the coverage you have, don’t spend time trying to figure out what is covered. Instead, Kincaid says, “look at the exclusion section to see what isn’t covered.” She adds that floods are not typically covered in normal policies, and landslides, which are a threat to certain areas of San Diego, particularly areas burnt by fire, are “not covered anywhere.”

While typical insurance policies don’t cover flooding, the federal government does offer flood insurance to homeowners, renters, condo owners/renters, and commercial owners/renters. FloodSmart.gov offers a One-Step Flood Risk Profile to help get the process started. For more information, please visit the National Flood Insurance Program’s Commercial Coverage web page.

If you do purchase flood insurance, it is important to make sure you buy an adequate amount to cover your needs. “Most people don’t buy enough coverage,” Kincaid says. While balancing coverage premiums can be a challenge, consumers need to understand that a single event can be financially crippling if the gap in insurance coverage is too wide. Valuing your property based on the value of similar properties in your area misses a crucial point: a true disaster might require rebuilding rather than simple repairs, she said. Therefore, insurance needs to take into account the cost of materials and labor, which can escalate after a wide-spread disaster due to labor and material shortages. And lastly, Kincaid says, at a minimum consumers should properly inventory and assign value to the contents of their property. There are a number of apps that can help with this. One recommended by Kincaid is the NAIC MyHome Scr.APP.book app, which is free and available for both iPhone and Android smart phone users.

The government might not be able to offer financial assistance, but it can offer guidance. That’s where the CDI can help. Its consumer services branch can help consumers compare policies, understand policy or contract language, and even assist those having trouble with claim requests. The CDI Consumer Services Branch can be reached toll free at 800-927-4357.
Alex Tardy, Warning Coordination Meteorologist Manager for the National Weather Service in San Diego, reports that record warmth has continued into 2015 with the winter months being the warmest on record for California (4.7 F above normal in the past 12 months). The past four years have seen the warmest consecutive 48 months in California on record (2.8 F above normal). During 2014-15, California received only 40 to 80 percent of average precipitation statewide making it the fourth year in a row of below average precipitation levels. The past 48 months or four consecutive seasons were the driest period on record for California (deficit of 26 inches of precipitation statewide).

December 2014 and February 2015 precipitation allowed for the most significant greening of grass across the state since 2011, but now the grasses have cured and, combined with the ongoing historic drought, pose above normal fire danger across most of California. To make the situation worse, the state snowpack was measured at an all-time record low of 5 percent on April 1, 2015, leading to further significant decreases in water supply. Currently, state water supply is at 54 percent of historical average capacity. Water supply is nearing all-time lows but remains higher than 1976-77. A combination of below normal precipitation this past year, and four of the driest-on-record conditions, have all led to extreme drought situations.

Along the Pacific Coast sea surface temperatures continue to run 2 to 5 degrees above normal and are contributing to the warm coastal temperatures. Across the equatorial Pacific Ocean average sea surface temperatures have warmed, creating expected moderate El Niño conditions. The resultant weather pattern brought an increased southern storm track to southern California and northern Texas in May 2015. Historically, several El Niño winters have brought normal and below normal precipitation. It is important to note, only the strong phase of the El Niño has been the most consistent with above normal precipitation for Southern California.

**September—November 2015**

Temperature (left) and precipitation (right) outlooks for the period Sept. - Nov. 2015. Green represents 33 to 50 percent chance of “above normal” precipitation. Source: Climate Prediction Center.

How to Prepare for El Niño

Meteorologists are forecasting what could potentially be a record-breaking El Niño weather pattern bringing heavy rainfall this winter. While an El Niño is no guarantee of any kind of rainfall, it is important that we are prepared in case historic rains do make their way to the region in the months ahead.

On the positive side, a strong El Niño could provide some relief to drought-stricken California and perhaps replenish some of our region’s depleted reservoirs. However, it is not expected to put an end to the state’s four-year ongoing drought, according to Alex Tardy Warning Coordination Meteorologist Manager for the National Weather Service in San Diego, since the wet winter forecast is primarily for Southern California.

On the negative side, an El Niño will likely bring increased storm frequency, not necessarily stronger storms, Tardy adds, which will bring an impact of increased flooding potential and potential land or debris flows. As the recent flooding in Ramona shows, consistent and significant rainfall can wreak havoc in our area. Just a few inches of rain in a short period of time can cause significant damage to residential and commercial properties.

With the start of El Niño expected to be still weeks away, you have time to take steps and make sure you are prepared both at home and at work.

The United States Department of Agriculture’s California Natural Resources Conservation Service offers the following do’s and don’ts for preventing soil erosion and debris flow on your property:

Do -

- Try to direct debris flows away from your property to a recognized drainage device or to the street.
- Clear a path for debris.
- Place protective measures to divert debris, and not dam it.
- Board up windows facing the flow.
- Work with your neighbors.

Don’t -

- Under estimate the power of debris flows.
- Walk or drive across through flowing water.
- Wait until storms arrive to make a plan.
- Try to confine the flows more than is necessary.
- Direct flow to neighbor’s property.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency also offers five things you can do now to prepare for a strong El Niño:

- Check your property. Clear drains, rain gutters and downspouts of debris.
- If you flood insurance, check your policy to make sure you have enough coverage (see page 2).
- Make copies of all your important documents and make sure the originals are stored safely somewhere outside of your home (like a safe deposit box—or consider storing copies of your vital documents in the Cloud).
- Take photos of your possessions (furniture, collectibles, electronics) and store the pictures along with your important documents outside of your home (consider smart phone apps to help—see page 2).
- Make an itemized list of clothes, books and small appliances and other possessions, and start saving receipts when you purchase items so you’ll have proof of their original cost.
Where to Get and How to Use Sandbags to Prevent Flooding

Where to Get Sandbags

In preparation for the potential wet weather in the coming months, the County of San Diego’s Department of Public Works is making sand and sandbags available to businesses and residents in the unincorporated areas at no cost. If you are interested in obtaining free sandbags, you can get them at the following locations (bring a shovel):

- Alpine, Alpine Fire Protection District, Station 17, 1364 Tavern Road (BAGS ONLY)
- Bonita, Bonita/Sunnyside Fire Department, 4900 Bonita Road
- Boulevard Fire & Rescue, 40080 Ribbonwood Rd., Boulevard, CA 91905
- Dulzura, CAL FIRE Station 30, 17304 Highway 94
- Fallbrook, North County Fire Protection District, Station 4, 4375 Pala Mesa Drive
- Julian, CAL FIRE Station 50, 1587 Highway 78
- Pauma Valley-Rincon, CAL FIRE Station 70, 16971 Highway 76
- Ramona, 3410 Dye Road, Ramona, CA
- Valley Center, CAL FIRE Station 73, 28205 N. Lake Wohlford Road

If you do not live in an unincorporated area, please contact your city’s Department of Public Works to see if sandbags are available.

How to Use Sandbags

The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) California Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers tips on how to use sandbags to help protect your property from flooding and debris flow.

Filling

- Filling sandbags is best done with two people.
- Fill half full with sand (if available) or local soil.

Stacking

- Fold top of sandbag down and rest the bag on its top on the stack.
- Top should be facing upstream. Stamp the bag into place.
- Complete each layer before starting the next layer.
- Stagger the layers.
- Stack no more than three layers high unless they are against a building or stacked pyramid-style.

Sandbag diversion

- Sandbags will redirect water away from property but will not seal out water.
- Place sandbags with the folded top toward the upstream or uphill direction.
- Sandbags are temporary and will deteriorate after several months.

For information, download the NRCS Homeowner’s Guide to Erosion Control.
Office of Emergency Services Open House

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) will be hosting an Open House on Friday, September 25 from 11:00 am - 1:00 pm. This is an opportunity for members of the ReadySanDiego Business Alliance to learn about current emergency management projects, meet with OES staff and hear more about their roles in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and tour the recently remodeled facility.

Recent modernization and upgrade efforts to the facility include:

- A completely remodeled Media Room
- Dedicated and pre-wired EOC Sections for streamlined activations
- An expanded Joint Information Center
- A quiet room for media interviews
- Updated radio room
- Improved lighting
- Fresh paint and new carpet

If you wish to attend the Open House, please RSVP to Shirla.hueth@sdcounty.ca.gov by Friday, September 18, 2015.

OES is located at 5580 Overland Avenue, Suite 100. Parking will be available in the parking structure on the east side of the COC campus, off of Farnham Street.

OES Staff Highlight: Welcome Julie Jeakle, Emergency Services Coordinator

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) is proud to announce the newest member of the team: Emergency Services Coordinator Julie Jeakle.

Julie came aboard in April, after working in the fields of emergency management and community engagement for over a decade. She has previously served in both the nonprofit and government sectors.

At OES, Julie will be coordinating emergency planning efforts related to Care & Sheltering as well as Access & Functional Needs.

Prior to joining OES, Julie was responsible for managing all aspects of emergency services programming for a small city on the Central Coast. There, she focused heavily on increasing the city’s ability to respond in times of disaster by planning and executing drills and exercises, writing emergency operations plans and implementing training programs for employee and volunteer responders.

In addition to her work at the city level, Julie developed expertise in spontaneous volunteer management, community preparedness and volunteer administration during her nine-year tenure with the American Red Cross, Central Coast Region. For the past three years, she has also shared her expertise at the state-level as a subject matter expert on the California Volunteers’ Disaster Volunteer Management curriculum development team. Julie also gained valuable emergency response experience while deploying on four national disaster relief operations with the American Red Cross, providing direct service to affected communities throughout the U.S.
Ready Carlsbad Business Alliance Receives National Recognition

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation has named the Ready Carlsbad Business Alliance a finalist for its 2015 Corporate Citizenship Award for Best Disaster Response and Community Resilience Program. The program recognizes companies for their disaster response and efforts to create more resilient communities. According to the Chamber, the 2015 finalists “show the significant, positive impact businesses have around the world.”

Other program finalists include UPS and Las Vegas Sands Corporation. The winner will be announced in Washington, D.C. on October 6.

Ready Carlsbad is co-chaired by David Harrison, Emergency Preparedness Manager for the City of Carlsbad, and Deb Beddoe, a Carlsbad business owner and Chamber Board Member. Both Harrison and Beddoe are also long-time members of the ReadySanDiego Business Alliance.

The Chamber recognized the Ready Carlsbad Business Alliance for its efforts to bring together local businesses, the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce, and the city of Carlsbad to promote business emergency preparedness, continuity of operations, and community recovery through services, educational programs, and cooperative partnerships. The Chamber also commended the Business Alliance for its accomplishments during the fires in May 2014. “The Business Alliance was tested after a San Diego County firestorm,” the Chamber wrote. “With city assistance, more than $20,000 was handed to 170 citizens who had suffered fire, smoke, ash damage, and related health effects.”

CSUSM to Offer Business Emergency Preparedness Planning Certificate

California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) is launching a Professional Certificate in Business Emergency Preparedness Planning (BEP) this fall.

Jeffre Segall, Executive Business Relations Officer for Extended Learning at CSUSM, led the effort to build the certificate program. “The purpose of the program is to provide a clear picture to businesses and organizations on the need, purpose and process for developing and implementing an emergency preparedness plan for their organization,” according to Segall. “This program is unique to other emergency and disaster programs because it is specifically designed to ensure a process that will mitigate damage in the event of a disaster, and allow for recovery and resumption of business in the aftermath of an emergency or disaster.”

The certificate program is designed for three different audiences:

♦ Any organization (business, civic, governmental or nonprofit) that has not developed an emergency plan.
♦ Any manager who is tasked with overseeing and directly managing an emergency plan for their organization.
♦ Anyone interested in making a career in emergency planning.

Participants in the program will study and learn about each phase of disaster preparedness planning; develop a detailed hazard vulnerability assessment, an emergency plan, a continuity and resumption plan and a recovery plan; and will have a hands on opportunity to develop an emergency plan using techniques, strategies and tactics learned in the class.

For more information, please visit CSUSM’s Business Emergency Preparedness Planning web page or call 760-750-4020.