

R

RECOVERY



F E M A
I S S U E 3

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

T I M E S



C A L I F O R N I A / A P R I L 3 , 1 9 9 8



FEMA photo by Dave Gattley

The city of San Leandro stepped forward to assist private homeowners move their threatened homes, protecting them from landslide damage. Geological technicians were hired to survey damage and recommend solutions.

PREPARATION PAID OFF

Federal and state response to the El Niño '98 storms continues, with damage estimated at \$500 million.

However, this figure is far less than the \$1.8 billion in damage from last year's storms.

"The damage from El Niño could have been much worse if Californians had not prepared," State Coordinating Officer Richard Andrews said.

Communities cleared storm drains, trimmed trees and stockpiled sandbags. Farmers and land owners along the Salinas River in Monterey County spent \$2 million to clean out vegetation, sandbars and other flow impediments along 40 miles of the river. So far, the Salinas River has not flooded.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers spent 11 months and \$120 million to repair levees in northern and central California. The San Diego Zoo Wild Animal Park built silt

dams to control runoff, cleaned drains and cleared brush. The park suffered no damage or loss of business.

In late 1997, state and federal preparedness summits were held, raising public awareness. Between the October FEMA summit and the end of January, 114,336 Californians bought flood insurance from the National Flood Insurance Program.

"When you consider that only 25,260 new policies were issued during the first nine months of 1997, it is apparent that many took the warnings to heart," Federal Coordinating Officer Dorothy M. Lacey said.

To date, FEMA has inspected properties of more than 39,000 El Niño storm victims for losses and damages. "Of those inspected, 31,377 have flood insurance," Lacey said. "Within the terms of their policies, their belongings will be replaced and their damages repaired."

Apply Now for Disaster Aid

Federal and state officials are urging Californians who suffered damages in the winter's El Niño storms to apply for disaster assistance before the May 8 deadline.

"We want to be sure that everyone affected by the El Niño storms since Feb. 2 has the opportunity to register for assistance," Federal Coordinating Officer Dorothy M. Lacey said.

By the end of March, nearly 60,000 Californians in 40 counties declared federal disaster areas had registered for disaster aid.

Storm-affected homeowners, renters and business owners may be eligible for assistance under several federal and state programs, including grants to help pay for temporary disaster housing, minor home repairs and other disaster-related necessary expenses and serious needs not covered by other aid programs.

Low-interest disaster loans also are available from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to cover residential and business losses not fully compensated by insurance.

State Coordinating Officer Richard Andrews noted that the application deadline for assistance was extended 30 days to May 8 to help those suffering damages late in the series of El Niño storms.

"We want to make sure they get a fair chance to register for assistance," Andrews said.

APPLY BY PHONE
1-800-462-9029
(TTY: 1-800-462-7585)
8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Seven Days a Week
Toll Free



A M E S S A G E F R O M

FEDERAL COORDINATING OFFICER

DOROTHY M. LACEY

As federal coordinating officer, I am responsible for coordinating federal resources to help Californians recover from the El Niño '98 storms. I served in the same capacity a year ago when flooding again wreaked havoc throughout the state.

I have witnessed firsthand the devastation disaster inflicts on communities: rivers of mud and mountains of earth toppling houses, families made homeless, businesses paralyzed, fields lying stagnant under floodwaters. I have seen the grief of countless people, as they pick up the pieces of their lives.

This is the fourth flood disaster in California in the last three years. Obviously, we Californians badly need to reduce our future disaster losses and the burden placed on taxpayers.

Fortunately, all the media attention on the El Niño phenomenon prompted many Californians to protect themselves, and it paid off. More than 129,000 people financially protected themselves from losses by buying flood insurance last year. Many communities educated residents about preparedness, stocked emergency supplies, cleared storm drains, repaired levees, and elevated flood-prone homes. The damage could have been much worse if warnings had been ignored and preventive measures not taken.

We must not let this latest disaster destroy our spirit. Instead the wreckage should motivate every one of us to think of the future. We must act now to lessen the risk of the next disaster.



A M E S S A G E F R O M

STATE COORDINATING OFFICER

RICHARD ANDREWS

California residents are all too familiar with disasters. In recent years, floods, earthquakes and fires have touched many of our families and communities, causing countless hardships and tragedies. Last year's winter storms brought significant damages which led to state and federal disaster declarations in 48 counties.

With this year's El Niño storms, many homes and communities are once again impacted. Currently, 41 counties are state and federally declared disaster areas. Thankfully, Californians have again demonstrated their ability to respond quickly and effectively.

One of the ways California is disaster-ready is through the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). Coordinated by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), SEMS establishes standard procedures and policies which are used by local emergency managers in response efforts.

The Mutual Aid System coordinated by OES organizes fire, law enforcement and telecommunications operations statewide for disaster deployment. Additionally, a frontline Emergency Digital Information System (EDIS) allows media instant access to all disaster-related information.

California's emergency management system, based on mutual cooperation and local participation, planning and preparation, enables us to protect ourselves and our communities during the current El Niño storms and in future disasters as well.

MAKE YOUR HOME DISASTER-RESISTANT

Homes with rivers running through them. Buildings swept off their foundations. Appliances submerged and destroyed beneath raging waters.

Californians endured such destruction during the recent El Niño storms. But when you rebuild and repair, you can take steps to protect your property in the future.

"It's less expensive to protect your home and property before they are damaged," Federal Coordinating Officer Dorothy M. Lacey said.

Ways to avoid flood damage include elevating your home or relocating out of the floodplain. There are also other methods:

Relocate the electrical box to an upper floor or elevate the electrical box to 12 inches above the base flood elevation.

Relocate the water heater and heating systems to an upper floor where they will be 12 inches above the base flood elevation

or elevate them on a masonry base 12 inches above the base flood elevation.

Anchor the fuel tank to the floor or wall to prevent overturning and floating. Metal structural supports and fasteners must be non-corrosive. Wooden structural supports must be pressure treated.

Install a floating floor drain plug at the lowest point of the lowest finished floor to allow water to drain. When the floor drain-pipe backs up, the float rises and plugs the drain.

Install an interior or exterior septic backflow valve to prevent sewer backup from entering your home.

Properly anchor manufactured homes. Soil conditions and flood hazards are some of the many factors affecting the type of anchoring system needed.

"People should consider investing in a variety of hazard mitigation measures," State Coordinating Officer Richard Andrews said.

Following is a summary of the efforts of some of the many agencies contributing to the disaster recovery effort in California.

Federal Agencies

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – FEMA is coordinating federal action to help people recover. About 330 FEMA employees have administered a variety of programs, including damage assessments, disaster housing assistance and grants to individuals and families and communicating information.

Through April 2, 61,880 people had called the toll-free registration line for assistance. Housing inspectors, who verified damages to determine eligibility for assistance, had completed 42,346 inspections. The disaster housing assistance program had issued 12,943 checks, totaling \$18.4 million, by that date.

FEMA also is providing assistance to local and state government agencies. In the first seven weeks after Feb. 9, when President Clinton issued a federal disaster declaration, FEMA committed more than \$13 million in “fast track” emergency federal assistance to help meet immediate state and local costs of flood fighting and debris removal in 20 eligible counties. Glenn County received the first emergency flood fighting funds this year, with more than \$3 million obligated by March 1.

Make sure disaster aid goes to those who deserve it.

FEMA Fraud Hotline.

1-800-323-8603

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, contact the FEMA Helpline 1-800-525-0321 (TTY: 1-800-660-8005).

Also, nearly \$4 million went to state agencies or multi-county government agencies, including \$2.6 million to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention and \$1.3 million to California’s Military Department.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) – SBA has opened disaster offices around the federally declared disaster areas to assist victims of the recent flooding. SBA representatives are available at all locations to provide assistance. SBA offers low-interest loans to homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes to cover losses to real estate, personal property and business property not fully covered by insurance.

As of April 2, SBA had issued 29,508 applications for home or personal property losses and 8,821 for business losses. At that time, SBA had received 5,498 completed applications and approved loans totaling almost \$19 million.

U.S. Department of Transportation – The department’s Federal Highway Administration has received approval for \$40 million in emergency relief funds to repair storm-damaged federal-aid roads. The administration has requested an additional \$60 million for repair work.

Internal Revenue Service – The agency advises taxpayers that they may claim flood-related casualty losses by amending their most recently filed tax returns. The deadline for disaster victims to file income tax and gift tax returns is generally extended for six months to Oct. 15, 1998. The six-month extension applies to disaster victims in the federally declared counties who file forms 1040, 1040EZ, 1041, 1065 and 709. Affected corporate taxpayers who file 1120 and 1120S forms with a fiscal year ended Dec. 31, 1997 will have a due date of Sept. 15, 1998, which is also the deadline for 1042 and 1042S filers.

State Agencies

Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (OES) – In response to the floods and storms, OES has directed more than 400 emergency response missions to aid local governments requesting assistance. Those missions included air rescue and emergency support operations, mutual aid assistance involving mobilization of Swift

Water Rescue Teams in the San Francisco area and deployment of incident management teams to local governments in flooded areas. OES’s State Operations Center (SOC) in Sacramento was activated to assist local governments throughout the state as well as three Regional Emergency Operations Centers (REOCS) in northern, central and southern California.

In order to speed the deployment of state emergency resources to local areas in need during the winter storms, OES established five mobilization centers in Tehama, Santa Rosa, Monterey, Stockton and Madera counties. OES deployed state resources from the centers to affected areas including personnel from the California Department of Forestry and California Conservation Corps; Department of Correction hand crew strike teams; California National Guard operational area teams; and Department of Water Resources flood fight specialists.

California Department of Social Services – California’s Individual Family Grant Program has already approved 1,426 applications and issued almost \$1 million in grants. About \$40,000 in State Supplemental Grants also has been approved.

California Conservation Corps (CCC) – Six-hundred corps members provided more than 83,000 hours of work in 23 counties. Work included sandbagging, levee protection, creek cleanup, debris removal, and more.

The CCC currently has 10 crews working throughout the state on recovery work. With funds from the federal Department of Labor administered through the state Employment Development Department, the CCC has hired long-term unemployed for three months of storm cleanup and recovery work.

California Department of Consumer Affairs – The Contractors State License Board’s Underground Economy Enforcement Units have issued 103 administrative citations and notices to appear to unlicensed contractors in disaster areas since the middle of February. The board sponsored two rebuilding forums in Sacramento and San Diego and plans a third forum May 6 at Hillsdale Mall in San Mateo.



FEMA Photo by David Gatley

In storm-stricken Laguna Canyon, workers try to clean the several feet of mud blocking home.

State Board of Equalization – The board advises on emergency tax relief that is available to business and property owners who suffered storm and flood damage. Extensions for payment of sales and use taxes and other special taxes such as gasoline taxes, use fuel taxes, alcohol beverage tax and cigarette tax may be available. A reduced property tax assessment and deferral of property taxes may also be available. For information on sales and use tax, gasoline tax, the use fuel tax and other special taxes, call the board's toll-free number **1-800-400-7115**. For information regarding property tax, contact your county assessor or see the board's **website: www.boe.ca.gov**.

California National Guard – Since Feb. 2 the CNG has performed more than 14,000 man-days (average is 12 hours). Missions included air and ground evacuation; transportation of emergency personnel and supplies; sandbagging; emergency shelter using armories; thermal imaging with OH-58 FLIR helicopters to detect levee leaks; reconnaissance and surveillance of roads, levees and rivers; clearing of river and lake debris; water trailers; photo recon flights; and VIP/DWR, USGS air transport.

Equipment used includes two C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft, 15 Blackhawk helicopters, two OH-58 FLIR helicopters, seven Chinook cargo helicopters, 156

trucks, 12 dump trucks, 88 HMMWVs, two buses, three fuelers, three dozers, three backhoes, three wreckers and six engineer bridge boats. Most equipment is still staged at or near mobilization sites in case of future operations.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection - The CDF had 537 people committed to the Merced County area during the March storms, including eight CDF fire crews and 20 supervising staff. The priorities were damage assessment and reconstruction of sandbag structures.

Volunteer Agencies

American Red Cross - The Red Cross cost for El Niño winter storm relief in California currently exceeds \$4 million. Red Cross opened 91 shelters for 5,112 persons, served more than 140,000 meals and opened more than 2,000 individual assistance cases at 19 service centers.

Other voluntary and interfaith groups – Church World Service, the umbrella religious organization, launched an appeal for \$350,000 to support three local interfaith groups. National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) and its 30 member agencies have provided services valued at over \$2 million.

California Prepared for El Niño Storms

The floods that devastated 48 California counties early in 1997 sent disaster losses soaring and led to the most extensive evacuations and sheltering operations in the state's history, according to State Coordinating Officer Richard Andrews of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES).

"In response to the floods," reports Andrews, "Governor Pete Wilson established the Flood Emergency Action Team (FEAT) to recommend initiatives to enhance the state's water management systems and flood fighting efforts. As part of the FEAT initiatives, OES revisited and addressed emergency preparedness, response and recovery issues."

OES, in charge of state disaster coordination, held workshops throughout California in 1997 to ensure maximum coordination between local and state agencies during an emergency.

Issues addressed included timely delivery of emergency information to the public; disaster assistance to local governments, special districts and private non-profit organizations; flood management and preparedness; multi-jurisdictional flood fighting operations; sheltering operations; and evacuations of people and animals. Training exercises were held by OES's Water and Rescue Teams and the Urban Search and Rescue Teams to ensure and maintain a high level of efficiency.

Regional briefings held late in 1997 in seven cities focused on the potential regional impacts of El Niño, preparedness actions by state and local agencies and methods of improving communication among different levels of government.

Governor Wilson funded over a million brochures titled "Be Winter Wise," which were distributed statewide. (Both English and Spanish versions are available on OES's website: **<http://www.oes.ca.gov>**.)

A new California emergency plan calls for increased planning by state agencies to support disaster activities ranging from mitigation to preparedness to response and recovery, and increasing the role of business and industry in local emergency planning efforts.

SBA OFFERS PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

The U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has already approved nearly \$19 million in low-interest disaster loans to Californians whose property was damaged in this winter's El Niño storms.

The SBA is the primary source of federal funds for long-term disaster recovery for

owners of private property, including homeowners, renters, non-farm businesses of all sizes and private non-profit organizations.

Low-interest loans cover costs to repair or replace damaged real estate, personal property and business assets that are not

fully covered by insurance or other aid.

SBA has opened disaster offices across the state where victims can meet directly with SBA representatives.

"We want to answer questions face to face and help people complete loan applications," according to Alfred E. Judd, director of SBA's disaster operations in the western United States. "We know that disaster victims have anxiety about the financial pressures of disaster recovery. We want to help ease people through a difficult time," Judd said.

Judd strongly encourages individuals and business owners to get personalized assistance at one of SBA's disaster offices and return the completed applications as quickly as possible in order to get a rapid response.

To find the location nearest you, call SBA's toll-free number **1-800-488-5323**.

SBA DISASTER OFFICES



Recovery Times is published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services with help from other federal, state and voluntary agencies. It provides timely and accurate information about disaster recovery programs. Comments and inquiries about *Recovery Times* may be directed to **1-800-525-0321**. For additional copies of *Recovery Times*, call **1-800-480-2520**.

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SAFEGUARDING COMPANIES IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

Chevron executives are delighted their California facilities were unscathed by the El Niño winter storms, but they understand their good fortune is no coincidence.

The oil company has been a corporate model in preparing for disasters, from buying its own sandbagging machine and stockpiling sandbags to investing in long-term preventive measures.

For instance, Chevron has embarked on an aggressive maintenance program to make the company more disaster resistant. Transformers have been rainproofed, gutters cleaned regularly and berms oiled to keep them waterproof.

Not all preparations are for flooding. In earthquake-vulnerable San Francisco, every floor of Chevron's buildings has a cabinet equipped with emergency supplies. The company also has its own post-earthquake building inspection plan and trains its employees how to examine and tag its quake-affected structures.

For Chevron, disaster preparation and hazard mitigation make good business sense.

"If we shut down a plant, we lose \$500,000 a day," Chevron spokesman Neil Ito said.

Businesses of all sizes stand to benefit by defending themselves from the interruptions and financial devastation of a natural disaster.



A specialist at Chevron shows where stainless steel covers have been placed atop transformer stations to stop electrical fires or shorts from occurring during heavy rains

FEMA photo by Dave Gattley

The survival of these businesses also protects jobs and helps communities rebound from a natural disaster.

A critical factor in achieving loss reduction is creating public/private alliances for sharing resources and information.

Businesses also can take simple, inexpensive

steps to reduce damage from future disasters, including identifying in advance any potential risks, contacting their business insurance agents to discuss disaster coverage and participating in local community mitigation efforts that reduce the risk to critical infrastructures such as electricity, water and roads.

CLIP AND SAVE

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Federal Agencies

FEMA Registration	800-462-9029
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired)	800-462-7585
Disaster Information Helpline	800-525-0321
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired)	800-660-8005
FEMA Fraud Detection	800-323-8603
National Flood Insurance Program	
(Obtain policy/information)	800-427-4661
Policyholders/claims	800-638-6620
Social Security Administration	800-772-1213
Small Business Administration	800-488-5323
Internal Revenue Service	800-829-1040
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired)	800-829-4059
Department of Agriculture	
Rural Development	916-668-2000
Farm Service Agency	916-498-5300
Food Safety Hotline	800-535-4555
Housing and Urban Development Hotline	800-669-9777
Department of Veterans Affairs	800-827-1000
Natural Resources Conservation Service	916-757-8200

State Agencies

Department of Insurance	800-927-4357
Cal Trans Highway Information Net	800-427-7623
Department of Consumer Affairs	800-952-5210
Contractors State License Board	
Disaster Hotline	800-962-1125
License Checkline	800-321-2752
Franchise Tax Board	800-852-5711
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired)	800-822-6268
Statewide Flood Information	800-952-5530
Veterans Affairs (CALVET)	800-952-5626
Attorney General's Office	800-952-5225

Other Service Providers

American Red Cross:	
Monterey-North	800-788-1736
Central-Inland	800-422-7935
South of Monterey	Call local chapter
Disaster Legal Services	800-310-7032
Salvation Army	Call local office