



Thomas Fire & 1/9 Debris Flow

Santa Barbara County Response and Recovery

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Thomas Fire

- **Largest wildfire in California history (until 2018 fire season)**
 - **281,893 acres; began 12/4**
 - **Extreme Conditions**
 - **Watersheds impacted**
- **Crossed into Santa Barbara County 12/7**
- **1,063 structures destroyed Ventura & SB County**
- **30,000 evacuated in SB County for two weeks**



Before the Storm

- USFS BAER and CAL FIRE WERT Teams analysis of watersheds
- December fire reduced reaction time for preparation
- While fire was still burning we prepared
- 1/5 Press conference
- 1/7 Storm Evacuations announced
 - Mandatory evacuation order – 5,000
 - Voluntary evacuation warning – 15,000
- Law enforcement - door to door



SBCountyOEM @SBCountyOEM · 21 Dec 2017

Today the County & Jurisdiction began planning for flash floods and debris flows resulting from the #ThomasFire. There is a high probability over the next few years.



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The Storm – Day Before

- EOC activated to highest level
- Local Emergency Proclamation Declared
- First Responders (Fire, Law, Search and Rescue, Flood Control) and National Guard resources prepositioned
- Local and Coast Guard helicopters on standby



Storm Disaster 1/9/18

- **2,323 first responders**
- **23 lives lost or missing**
- **28 injured;**
- **75 Helicopter Rescues**
- **1000 animals evacuated**
- **Hwy 101 closed for 12 days**
- **Hwy 192 remains closed to through traffic, 4 bridges destroyed, 2 damaged**
- **All utilities out (gas, water, electricity, sewer)**
- **11 Debris basin & 12 creek channels completely full in Montecito and Carpinteria**



Debris Management

- **Classification of Debris;**
 - **Public**
 - **Roads (Public Works)**
 - **Creek Channels (Flood Control District)**
 - **Debris Basins (Flood Control District)**
 - **Private Lands**
 - **Landfills?**
 - **Material Exchange**
 - **Farms**
 - **Beach Sediment Deposition**



Storm Impact – Video (click photo)



Santa Barbara County

@countyofsb

Following

We will recover. We will heal. We are
[#805strong](#)



2:54 PM - 17 Jan 2018



Recovery

- Family Assistance Center (FAC)
- Local Assistance Center (LAC)
- Disaster Recovery Center (DRC)
- **Montecito Center for Preparedness, Recovery and Rebuilding (MCPRR)**
- Long Term Recovery Group (LTRC)



Financial Recovery

- County Identified approximately **\$50 million** in damages
- USACE Debris Basins **\$120 million**
- Property tax loss **\$\$**
- Sales Tax – **loss for SB City**
- Assessed Valuation **\$356 million** (schools, special districts and the County)
- TOT **initial loss and continue to lose...**
- Local Schools (**average daily attendance**)
- **Still under Debris Flow Risk for the next 2-5 years**



Successes and Lesson Learned

- **Evacuation is critical** - Message must be simple and clear
- Interactive maps are essential for public understanding
- Alert early and use all methods – invest in the technology and training
- Mental Wellness requires resources and effort
- Debris Management is challenging – hold daily debris management meetings
- Debris Flows need to be considered after every wildfire
- Meteorology is limited for storm intensity prediction
- **Climate change impacts to Emergency Management**



Successes and Lessons Learned

- **Evacuate only when necessary, only those areas necessary and for the shortest possible time necessary**
- **Provide the community with clear, timely information and rationale for evacuations**
- English / Spanish languages on everything
- Establish a bilingual Call Center
- **Community Engagement is extremely important**



Recovery

- **Partnerships are vital to success**
- Recovery needs are very different than Response needs
- ICS based organization chart
- Nimble Organization for solving problems (Transportation, Debris, Insurance, Permits, Evacuation Protocols)
- **Longer term (Policies, Plans, Partnerships)**

