



The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

October 2005

Remembering the 2003 Firestorms

Steady Progress on the Fire Front

Regional fire entity moving forward, Jacob says other changes taking shape

The region’s defenses against wildfire are considerably stronger than they were two years ago when a fire stoked by fierce Santa Ana winds raced across a third of the region, destroying lives, homes and landscape.

From firefighting helicopters to changes in building codes to a significant communications network upgrade, the list of changes achieved by San Diego County and other jurisdictions is long and growing longer.

The most important change— that is, the quest to consolidate some or perhaps all of the 60-plus separate fire agencies scattered throughout the region— is moving forward. Last month, the effort was bolstered by a decision of the Board of Supervisors to enhance fire protection and emergency medical services in unincorporated communities that currently have little to none.

In total, the County agreed to spend about \$5 million to beef up fire and emergency services in rural communities, many hard hit by the 2003 Firestorms. The money will be used to partner with the California Department of Forestry (CDF) to keep nine seasonal fire

station open year round. In addition, funds will help the region’s neediest fire departments purchase equipment, gear, fuel, insurance and other critical items.

The County’s contribution is proof positive of its commitment to work with

other agencies to adequately safeguard our region from wildfire. Nearly all agencies agree that some sort of countywide firefighting entity is needed. Possible models and price tags for such an entity will be the subject of a report due out in December by the Local Agency Formation



TWO YEARS LATER: Are we safer?

Commission.

That the County has identified a long term funding mechanism for such an entity and is actively pursuing state legislation to put that mechanism in motion is additional evidence of its progress in the fight against fire.

Below are some other ways the County is making headway in the fire fight:

Fighting the Flames

There was no locally-owned firefighting helicopter on the scene during the initial hours of the Cedar Fire. Today, two County-owned firefighting helicopters can take to the skies when flames break out in local forests and canyons. The Sheriff’s Department owns the “Super Hueys” and operates them through a partnership with

Continued on Page 2

Serving the Cities of:
El Cajon
La Mesa
Lemon Grove
Poway
Santee

Serving the communities of:
Agua Caliente
Allied Gardens
Alpine
Barrett
Blossom Valley
Bostonia
Boulevard
Campo
Canebrake
Casa de Oro
Crest
Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
Grantville
Guatay
Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jamul
Julian
Lake Morena
Lakeside
Mount Helix
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
Ramona
Rancho San Diego
Rolando
San Carlos
San Pasqual
Santa Ysabel
Shelter Valley
Spring Valley
Tecate
Tierra del Sol
Vallecitos
Wynola

Serving the Indian Reservations of:
Barona
Campo
Cosmit
Cuyapaipe
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas



Firestorm Anniversary.....Page 1
Firestorm Anniversary.....Page 2
Meth and Identity Theft.....Page 3
Get the Journal.....Page 4
How to reach me.....Page 4

with CDF. The \$5 million choppers were purchased using County funds and a grant from local Indian funds.



Air War: additional County resources are ready for action.

A year-old agreement between CDF, the Navy and the Marines continues to ensure that military air resources can battle future fires. Turned away two years ago because of training issues, military pilots have

since received civilian fire zone training.

When it comes to fighting fires less than 30 minutes before sunset, CDF has modified its rules. If conditions are right, pilots now have the ability to make water drops if they feel it is safe to fly.

Aerial resources aren't a magic bullet against fire. They must be used in combination with ground support. Today, fire professionals can count on outside assistance from citizen volunteer teams. In the last two years, more than 2,000 volunteers have been trained to help during disasters. These ordinary citizens can give critical support to first responders and help organize volunteers at disaster scenes.

Better Brush Management

Clearing brush around structures is less confusing than it was before the Firestorms. The County made the process easier last year when it gave fire professionals the final say on brush clearance. Today, when a fire chief orders a set distance to be cleared, the County doesn't interfere.

County efforts to educate property owners about defensible space and dry brush haven't slowed. We continue to partner with CDF to identify properties in need of upkeep. Together, we're working to bring property owners into voluntary compliance with brush clearing standards.

The County and other jurisdictions who comprise the Forest Area Safety Task Force (FAST), are turning the tables against the destructive bark beetle. Thanks to a \$40 million federal grant and \$5 million from the County, about 200,000 dead trees have been removed from fire prone areas, especially Julian, Cuyamaca and Palomar Mountain. Particular attention has been paid to clearing evacuation routes.

Clearer Communications

The internal radio system used by regional emergency personnel was riddled with busy signals during the Firestorms. That's changing. The County has spent \$20 million for an upgrade which should be online by March 2006.

Communications between CDF and the County should improve under an agreement that stations a CDF representative in the Emergency Operation Center—the "nerve center" during disasters.

Focus on Evacuation and Notification

Two years ago, many people complained that evacuation orders were slow to reach remote areas. The County is about to unveil a "Reverse 911" telephone alert system that can speed dial hundreds of homes with instructions. No substitute for door-to-door evacuations, the system will give us another tool to warn people about fire. The Emergency Alert System which provides disaster information to news outlets has been fine tuned too.

More than a dozen smaller communities now have evacuation plans that should help with mass exits. The plans list locations that can be used as shelters for those trapped behind emergency road closures. Many communities have conducted drills.

The removal of livestock from danger zones was a challenge during the Firestorms. A public education campaign featuring noted personality Joan Embry, is helping spread the word about keeping trailers on hand for transport.

Stronger, Safer Structures

Building codes have changed since the October fires too. New homes in high-risk fire zones must use tempered glass for skylights, metal rain gutters and boxed in eaves. Even if structures aren't in fire zones, new construction must use fire-resistant roofing like concrete tiles, fire resistant exterior walls, dual glazed windows and other improvements.

The region is safer from wildfire than we were two years ago, but this is not cause for celebration. It's cause to continue our efforts to make the region better prepared for fire. Natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and man-made calamities like 9-11 remind us that preparedness means readying the region for a variety of threats. The Firestorms of 2003 have aided us in this endeavor, proving that some good does come from disaster.

National Spotlight Reveals Dangers of U.S.-Mexico Border

It's a nightly occurrence in East County: Vans and cars packed with illegal immigrants careening across dark roadways with their headlights off.

Supervisor Jacob gave television personality Sean Hannity an earful as the two discussed wrong way drivers on the Hannity and Colmes show recently. The program, which airs on the Fox News Channel, spent three days broadcasting from the Border and helped call attention to long-standing problems

in the area. Mr. Hannity was surprised to learn that in San Diego County, wrong way drivers have killed 75 people and seriously injured more than 500 others since 1993. That doesn't count the nightly near misses!



Border Order: Supervisor Jacob joined host Sean Hannity of the Hannity and Colmes television program to discuss problems facing U.S. residents who live along the Border with Mexico.

DON'T LET METH USERS STEAL YOUR GOOD NAME

An old, familiar enemy is causing new harm to our County. We already know that the drug methamphetamine turns users into crazed criminals. These days, meth users are out to steal your identity.

In 2004, there were 1,500 cases of identity theft in our County. An astounding 75 percent were meth-related!

Each of those cases involved personal trauma because victims of identity theft spend countless hours trying to get their lives back. The cases also took a toll on taxpayers. Arresting, prosecuting and incarcerating identity thieves doesn't come cheap.

The Meth Strike Force hopes its just-launched "SMAC" campaign— Stop Meth Associated Crimes— will keep users from getting their hands on your personal information.

The Strike Force is getting help from the San Diego County Hotel Motel Association which has agreed to train its hotel staffers to spot identity thieves and look for meth-related activities.

You can help by shredding all documents with personal information on them.

If you suspect someone is using information that's not their own, call the anonymous Meth Hotline at 1-877-No2Meth.



Join Supervisor Jacob for Coffee and Conversation

Friday, October 28, 2005 at 8:30 a.m.

Barrett Junction Café

Highway 94, Dulzura

Get The Jacob Journal!

The Jacob Journal will be mailed to you on a regular basis by request only. If you like what you've read, fill out the form below and mail it back to us at 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101 or fax it to us at (619) 696-7253. You can also sign up to receive the Jacob Journal on our website at www.diannejacob.com.

Name _____

Signature _____

Company _____

Mailing Address _____

City, Zip _____

Phone/e-mail _____

We hope to hear from you soon!

OCT-05

(619)531-5522

The Second District Staff

Geoff Patnoe

Chief of Staff

Caroline Braun

Senior Field Representative

Jeff Collins

Senior Policy Advisor

Erin Farris

Policy Advisor

Nathaniel Potter

Field Representative

Donna Sievert

Office Manager & Scheduler

Robert Spanbauer

Policy Advisor

Jennifer Stone

Communications Advisor

Adam Wilson

Policy Advisor

DIANNE JACOB

*Supervisor, Second District
San Diego County Board of Supervisors
1600 Pacific Highway, Room 335
San Diego, CA 92101*

*(619) 531-5522
(800) 852-7322 toll free
(619) 696-7253 fax*

*e-mail:
Dianne.Jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov*

*website:
www.diannejacob.com*