

San Diego Newsline

Downtown San Diego news — the budget, public safety, business, and the civic life of America's Finest City

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COUNTY

Parks Fees to Increase Slightly Next Month



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Some user fees at County Parks will increase slightly for camping, parking, fishing permits, boating rentals, and sport facilities starting Feb. 18. It's been a decade since fees were raised at County parks .

The increase helps Parks keep pace with rising costs while continuing to deliver best-in-nation outdoor and recreation spaces at a good value when compared to similar park systems.

Most of the fee increases are a few dollars. For example, Day Use Parking will increase from \$3.00 per day to \$5.00 per day and an RV partial hook-up campsite will increase from \$29 to \$35. Revising the fees will also make things simpler by including up to two pets and one extra vehicle as part of your camping reservation.

In addition, Parks has programs to expand access to the outdoors and reduce financial barriers, including veteran, senior and group discounts as well as scholarships and the free First Time Camping Program .

County Parks & Recreation services enhance the quality of life for County residents and visitors. They promote health and wellness and safe communities through thousands of programs for all ages and abilities, including 158 facilities across more than 58,000 acres of land and 389 miles of trails.

For more information, please visit the Q&A on the Department of Parks & Recreation website .

County of San Diego news release · Jan 17, 2025

COUNTY

All CalFresh Recipients Can Purchase Hot, Prepared Food through Feb. 8 Due to California Wildfires

All San Diego County CalFresh recipients can use their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card to purchase hot and prepared food for a limited time due to the Presidential Major Disaster Declaration for the California wildfires.

With few exceptions, CalFresh EBT cards usually can only be used to purchase shelf-stable foods. Through February 8, 2025, all CalFresh recipients can purchase hot and prepared food at any authorized EBT retailer.

The temporary change was approved by Food and Nutrition Service for San Diego County which is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The agency allows the modification under conditions such as power outages, damage to homes, the displacement of residents, and other conditions that prevent households from purchasing and preparing food.

Food Nutrition Service has notified all authorized San Diego County EBT retailers of the waiver and is encouraging stores to post notices alerting customers of the change.

For a list of authorized EBT retailers, visit fns.usda.gov.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 17, 2025

COUNTY

Mobile Crisis Response Program Celebrates Four Years

The County's Mobile Crisis Response Team program is celebrating four years supporting those facing behavioral health crises.

The program launched in January 2021 as a pilot . It has grown exponentially, going from 131 calls in its first year to more than 7,000 between July 2023 and June 2024.

Response teams are made up of trained personnel who can work directly with people, assess their needs and identify ways to de-escalate behavioral health crises without involving law enforcement.

“These teams are effectively meeting those in crisis where they are and stabilize more than 50% of cases in the field, reducing stress on law enforcement,” said Dr. Luke Bergmann, director of Behavioral Health Services. “These interactions are improving outcomes and connecting people with services to change their trajectory moving forward.”

Since the program's inception, the number of teams has grown from two to 44 while concurrently continuing to increase the ways it supports the region. For example, since November 2024, MCRT teams are able to respond to crises in students from kindergarten through 12 th grade in every school district in the region.

Teams can respond to behavioral health crises that do not include threats of violence or medical emergencies. These teams provide assessments, leverage crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques, and connect individuals with services and resources.

Some common signs of a behavioral health crisis are:

Changes in mood or behaviors that cause concern

Sudden changes to hygiene and self-care practices

Unusual thoughts, sounds or visions that cause fear or distress

Sudden onset or increase of substance use

Sense of loss of control over thoughts, feelings, emotions or behaviors

The MCRT anniversary coincides with observance of Mental Health Month.

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Mobile Crisis Response Program Celebrates Four Years

In another advancement of behavioral health care availability, the 988-crisis line phone number is now working region-wide to connect callers directly to local specialized teams. The Federal Communications Commission required all cellphone carriers as of Jan. 13 to route 988 calls to local providers rather than a transfer center.

The Access and Crisis Line is available in more than 200 languages.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 22, 2025

COUNTY

Results of Household Tijuana River Valley Health Assessment Are In

The results of the first federal health survey in San Diego County looking into the effects of Tijuana River sewage contamination are in.

The Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response, or CASPER, survey brought the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to the County’s South Bay and Nestor communities the weekend of Oct. 17, 2024.

The results from the in-person household interviews showed that most people living in the area have health concerns, symptoms and quality-of-life issues they associate with the Tijuana River Valley sewage crisis.

“We are grateful to all the residents who took part in the CASPER survey and for

the partnership with the CDC in getting this done,” said Dr. Ankita Kadakia, County Interim Public Health Officer. “These results validate the concerns residents of the South Bay have been voicing and the real impacts the sewage contamination is having on people’s lives, physical and mental health. Collecting this information represents an important step forward in strengthening our collaboration with local, state and federal partners.”

Over three days starting on Oct. 17, 2024, surveyors went to 480 homes where 333 households answered the door and 189 agreed to be interviewed. The homes were in selected clusters designed to represent the 40,911 households in South Bay and Nestor communities.

The assessment covered household experiences, health symptoms related to sewage contamination and household concerns over air and water quality. Participants also were asked how they get their information and what resources they need.

The complete assessment is available to the public on an interactive dashboard on the County’s website (sandiegocounty.gov/southregionhealth). Some highlights include:

81 percent said their household’s health was among their top concern

67 percent believed their health has gotten worse

69 percent said one or more household member has health symptoms from the sewage crisis

Symptoms most frequently

reported were headache, nausea or upset stomach, cough and irritated throat

18 percent sought medical care as a result of the sewage crisis

Regarding impacts of the sewage crisis on daily life:

80 percent said their quality of life has been negatively impacted

65 percent took extra steps to avoid certain areas like river water and beach water

71 percent said they could smell sewage inside their home, outside their home and in their neighborhood

Of those that could smell sewage, nearly 70 percent said the sewage smell was strongest at night

72 percent said they closed their windows to reduce the smell

59 percent made some or many changes to their daily activities and routines due to the sewage crisis

More than half decreased their time spent at beaches, outside or at parks

70 percent said the sewage crisis caused one or more disruptions to their household’s lives.

38 percent said their anxiety and worry increased

59 percent said their overall stress increased

The CASPER also revealed that 67 percent of households use bottled water or water from another source and 28 percent said they changed their drinking water source since the sewage crisis began. Another 71 percent said they do not believe tap water is safe.

Regarding how people are

receiving information, 55 percent said their most trusted source was the County health department followed by friends and family and their doctor. Social media was identified as the most useful source of information, at 57 percent.

The County is leading collaboration with multiple agencies and bringing them together for regular meetings to address air and water issues related to the Tijuana River Valley crisis.

Based on assessment results, the County has identified the following priority actions to address with collaborating partners.

Communication : Share health and resource information in multiple formats including social media and via community outreach workers.

Drinking Water : Educate the community about how drinking water is tested and kept safe.

Mental Health Concerns : Promote mental health services and resources.

Healthcare Providers : Update providers on surveillance activities and ongoing projects.

Pet Concerns : Engage with vets, hospitals and area animal organizations.

The CASPER survey is not the only assessment addressing sewage contamination in the County’s south region.

The federal Assessment of Chemical Exposure (ACE) survey from the CDC’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) was completed in November

2024. It asked 2,150 San Diegans who live, work or play around the Tijuana River Valley and South San Diego County about the effects of being near the sewage contamination. ACE survey results should be available in the next couple of months.

Following formal requests from local congressional delegations, and months of discussions with the County, the ATSDR agreed to add another assessment, this time to monitor and analyze hydrogen sulfide in the air and its effects on people’s health. This additional assessment could take about two years.

To learn more about health concerns and impacts from sewage and pollution in the Tijuana River Valley and the CASPER survey, visit sandiegocounty.gov/southregionhealth.

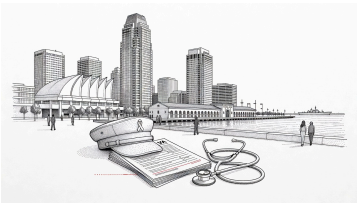
Mental health resources are available for anyone feeling emotionally affected by the Tijuana River Valley sewage crisis through the San Diego Access Crisis Line by calling 1-888-724-7240 or 988.

The CASPER survey came after a County request in May 2024 to the California Department of Public Health asking for support in addressing Tijuana River Valley pollution. The County also formally reached out in June 2024 to the CDC’s National Center for Environmental Health requesting an investigation called an Epi-Aid into the Tijuana River Valley. The Epi-Aid was verbally approved July 2024.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 16, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



Illustration

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight: Sunnyside Veterans Consulting

Sunnyside Veterans Consulting is a medical consulting firm that assist veterans across the Nation with VA Disability Compensation Claims. Founded in 2020, by Lude Ricard, MSPT CES. Lude transitioned from owning a successful physical therapy practice to dedicating her full energy and talent helping veterans win their disability claims against the Veterans’ Affairs. Sunnyside Veterans Consulting is comprised of

medical doctors, clinical psychologists, podiatrist, audiologists, and orthopedic clinicians who are skillful at writing expert medical opinions letters also known as “Nexus Letters” which serve as a powerful tool for veterans seeking VA Disability benefits. A well-crafted nexus letter can significantly strengthen your claim and provide the medical evidence to link your claim/condition to military service.

With a highly success rate (> 94%), the team of clinicians at Sunnyside Veterans Consulting (www.sunnysidevets.com) work diligently and expertly to ensure that a veteran’s claim or condition ultimately gets approved. SVC’s mission is “To Help veterans obtain the maximum VA Disability

Rating they earn and deserve.”

To learn more about our organization, please visit: https://www.sunnysidevets.com

Call our Office (858)- 547-9101. Text (619) 621-9215

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jan 15, 2025

BUSINESS

Start 2025 Strong: January IOP Enrollment Open!

Looking for convenient, high-quality mental health care? Thousand Branches Wellness in beautiful Mission Valley is here for you! Our IOP program is designed with convenient daytime hours to fit your schedule while offering exceptional care to help you achieve balance and wellness in the new year.

Flexible Scheduling : Our program is available Monday through Friday, from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM, allowing clients to select three consecutive days each week to attend, with both virtual and in-person options.

Comprehensive Services: We specialize in evidence-based practices like DBT and CBT, offering therapy for anxiety, depression, PTSD, and more.

Experienced Team: Our compassionate professionals are committed to your journey, providing support every step of the way.

In-network with Major Health Plans: Welcoming Aetna, Blue Cross, and Blue Shield members, with additional major insurance plans pending approval. We offer support navigating

self-pay options and out-of-network coverage, when applicable.

Convenient location: Centrally located in Mission Valley, with easy access to all major freeways, making us the perfect option for those commuting from anywhere in San Diego County.

Beautiful Facility: Experience treatment in a serene, welcoming environment that promotes healing and growth.

Don’t wait to prioritize your mental health. Let us help you start the year with a plan for growth, balance, and success!

Call us today at 619.202.8586 to secure your spot!

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jan 6, 2025



Slightly higher user fees
THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

Opinion — the views of the writers named, not news reporting

ABOUT THIS PAPER San Diego Newsline covers downtown San Diego first —	City Hall, the Gaslamp Quarter, East Village, Little Italy, Barrio Logan and the	waterfront — and the county around it. Every item names its source; read the originals	and our standards at sandiegonewslne.com.	
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