

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

Community Events Planned to Showcase New Medi-Cal Services



Illustration from a photo by Edward O'Connor (hober) · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

People experiencing homelessness, those with mental health conditions or substance use disorders, and former foster youth, among others, may be eligible for new services through Medi-Cal.

This help is available at no cost to eligible Medi-Cal members who have one of the region's four Medi-Cal Health Plans: Blue Shield Promise, Community Health Group, Kaiser Permanente or Molina Healthcare.

The two new services are called Enhanced Care Management and Community Supports and are tailored for Medi-Cal members with specific needs.

Enhanced Care Management services include a care manager who works with the member's health care team (doctors, pharmacists, specialists) to ensure they are getting needed care.

Care managers help with a variety of things including coordinating rides to and from doctor's appointments, explain medications and insurance benefits, and make health appointments.

Community Supports are short-term services for Medi-Cal members who meet eligibility requirements. Members can get help with:

Housing Create a housing plan and assist with a housing search

Personal and home care services to make your home safer

Recovery Heal somewhere safe after being in the hospital

There are a number of upcoming community events where the public can learn more about these new

Medi-Cal services, both in-person and online. Current Medi-Cal members and those who support members are encouraged to attend and learn about services and eligibility criteria.

All events will present the same information and will have a resource fair to directly connect those eligible with services. A meal, childcare and gift card incentives will be provided at each event.

Border View Family YMCA, 3601 Arey Dr, San Diego, CA 92154

Copley-Price Family YMCA, 4300 El Cajon Blvd, San Diego, CA 92105

Escondido Center for Community Well-Being, 649 West Mission Avenue #1, Escondido, CA, 92025

Ronald Reagan Community Center, 195 E Douglas Ave, El Cajon, CA 92020

Mira Mesa Senior Center, 8460 Mira Mesa Blvd, San Diego, CA 92126

You can also see if you are eligible for these new services by calling the customer service number on the back of your Medi-Cal health plan card.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 16, 2025



Illustration

COUNTY

Resources Available for Residents Affected by the Coches Fire

An online guide is available to help people who lost their home or sustained damages in the Coches Fire. Resources include information for homeowners seeking property tax relief, permits for repairs or rebuilding, along with self-sufficiency resources.

Details about these services are listed on the County AlertSanDiego website, including contact information for various agencies

Some services provided by the County include:

The Assessor has Disaster Relief claim forms for homes or businesses with property damages of \$10,000 or more. The office can also assist with vital record replacement.

Planning and Development Services assists with temporary occupancy permits, and information related to repairs and rebuilding.

Health and Human Services offers information on assistance for food, medical services, housing and more.

Environmental Health and Quality assists with permits for repairs on damaged mobile home parks and water systems.

Additionally, information for community-based organizations such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Team Rubicon is also included.

The County Office of Emergency Services provides regional recovery

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Resources Available for Residents Affected by the Coches Fire

resources following an emergency or disaster. Before an emergency, register your cell phone for AlertSanDiego emergency alerts, create a Personal Disaster Plan , create an evacuation go-kit and a shelter-in-place kit , and practice evacuating your household in 15 minutes or less.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 12, 2025

COUNTY

Two New Child Deaths Added to Flu Totals Last Season as New Season Approaches

The 2024-25 flu season was one of the most severe in a decade for hospitalizations and deaths. As the County enters a new flu season, doctors are worried it could be just as bad, in part due to low and declining vaccination rates.

To turn that around and build support from the regional medical community in advance of the season, a Kick the Flu +2 Summit was held this week in Kearny Mesa at the County Operations Center. The gathering brought together health professionals, clinicians, educators, and public health

advocates to discuss the latest vaccine recommendations, review data trends and share effective strategies to boost immunization rates.

Seasonal flu (influenza) is a contagious respiratory illness that spreads easily from person to person, mostly through droplets in the air , when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. Though less common, it also can be transmitted by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

The flu annually fills emergency departments, hospital rooms and too often leads to deaths, even among the youngest.

San Diego County last year recorded nearly 40,000 cases of the flu. Those cases resulted in 220 deaths compared to 63 deaths in the previous season. Seven of those fatalities were children, up from two the previous season when 6,127 pediatric flu cases were reported, and the highest number of child deaths since 2009/2010 when four were recorded.

“It is a tragedy to report these seven pediatric deaths from the flu and our hearts go out to the families grieving the loss of children,” Dr. Seema Shah, Medical

Director of County Epidemiology and Immunization Services, told those attending the flu summit. “An annual flu vaccine will give you and your family the best protection from severe illness and death.”

Everyone six months of age and older should get a flu shot each year, ideally before the end of October, according to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This is especially important for those with underlying conditions and a high risk of flu complications.

Flu season in San Diego generally runs from October through May, with peak activity usually between December and February. It often is unpredictable. Last year’s flu season peaked twice, at the end of December and in early February, and then stayed around longer than usual contributing to the higher case numbers.

Flu symptoms can come on suddenly and may include:

Vomiting or diarrhea (more common in children)

County Public Health Officer Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan has some simple advice on the vaccination.

“It doesn’t matter where you go to get vaccinated, just that you do get vaccinated,”

Dr. Thihalolipavan said. “The more people who get vaccinated, the better protected we will be as a community.”

Flu vaccinations can be scheduled through a health care provider or local pharmacy. Online, people can secure an appointment at My Turn – California Vaccine Scheduling & Information Site . Those without insurance can get the vaccine at a County health clinic.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 12, 2025

COUNTY

Affordable Housing Development Breaks Ground in Pacific Beach

A groundbreaking celebration was held today in Pacific Beach for Rose Creek Village, a 60-home development at 2662 Garnet Avenue for low-income seniors, families and individuals who earn 30-60% of the San Diego Area Median Income .

The development includes 18 units designated for homeless veterans with VASH vouchers and will include supportive services for residents through County Behavioral Health.

On-site amenities will include laundry, EV chargers, secured bike storage, a

barbecue area and other shared community spaces. Rose Creek Village is a 10-minute walk to the Balboa Avenue transit station and two bus stops, including a route that drives directly to a nearby blue line trolley stop.

Completion of Rose Creek Village is expected in 2027.

The County contributed \$3.7 million in No Place Like Home funding toward Rose Creek Village along with the 20-year commitment to provide Behavioral Health supportive services to qualifying residents.

Developed by National CORE, Rose Creek is unique due to its coastal location and height. At five stories, it exceeds the typical 30-foot height limit in a coastal zone.

Since 2017, the County has invested more than \$327 million into affordable housing, using excess land, its Innovative Housing Trust Fund, and other state, federal and local funding. Those funds have helped open doors to 2,901 homes, with 3,072 more on the way.

More information about Rose Creek Village is available at the National CORE website .

County of San Diego news release · Sep 17, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight: Coastal Nonprofit Consulting

From Funding Frustration to Financial Confidence: How Coastal Nonprofit Consulting Helps San Diego Nonprofits Thrive

Nonprofit leaders are some of the most passionate people in San Diego. But too often, their energy is consumed not by the mission, but by the maze of fundraising. Chasing grants that go nowhere, watching peers win major donors while you spin your wheels, and facing board pressure to “just raise more” can leave even the strongest leaders feeling overwhelmed and isolated.

At Coastal Nonprofit Consulting , we believe your mission deserves better. We know because we’ve been there—submitting grant applications for our salaries at midnight, navigating awkward board meetings, and wondering how the next payroll would get covered. Those experiences shaped the way we work today: with clarity, practicality, and deep respect for the challenges nonprofit

leaders face.

Courtney and Doug Oliphant, our CEO and COO, have helped nonprofits across the region and beyond raise millions in new revenue. From transforming a \$100,000 arts program into a \$400,000 independent nonprofit to increasing annual donor participation by 53% at a major institution, our approach is simple: stop chasing every opportunity and instead focus on the right opportunities.

1. Listen – We start with an honest conversation about where you are now and where you want to go.

2. Map a path – Together, we’ll create a plan tailored to your goals, capacity, and culture.

3. Roll up our sleeves – Whether it’s identifying hidden donors, finding the right grants, or building systems that work, we help you implement changes that stick.

The result? Predictable revenue, less stress, and more energy for the work that matters most.

If you feel like you’re leaving money on the table, let’s

talk. Schedule your free Curious Conversation today and take the first step toward sustainable funding.

Because financial clarity today creates the freedom to dream bigger tomorrow.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Sep 11, 2025

BUSINESS

From the Desk of Veronica Perondi – September 2025

The National Community Leadership Collaborative recently shared results from a survey collected from ten years of alumni across ten leadership organizations. It reaffirms what many of us already know: community leadership programs change lives and they change communities.

97% gained information that helped them better understand the issues impacting their community

91% diversified their network by building relationships with classmates and other leaders in their community

89% believe their participation in the program benefits their community

85% grew their confidence to drive positive change in their community

77% grew their ability to communicate with people across differences

71% have become active is new or deeper ways in their community (board service, volunteerism, running for public office, and other types of civic or philanthropic engagement)

69% learned skills that helped them be more effective in formal and informal leadership roles

At a time when division feels increasingly normalized and budget cuts are forcing many organizations to make hard choices, these results are a reminder: investing in leadership – especially community leadership – is not a luxury. It’s a necessity. And programs like LEAD are proof.

Community leadership programs exist in nearly every city across the country, united in their missions to connect, educate and prepare people to make a difference in their communities. I recently attended the Legacy and Community Champions

panel hosted by the Burnham Center for Community Advancement that featured a conversation across generations. One panelist was asked what makes a good leader. Part of the answer was a willingness and desire to keep learning.

That desire to learn is evident in our incoming Impact 2026 cohort, which started their journey this past Friday. This marks our 46 th cohort and you can meet the newest class here .

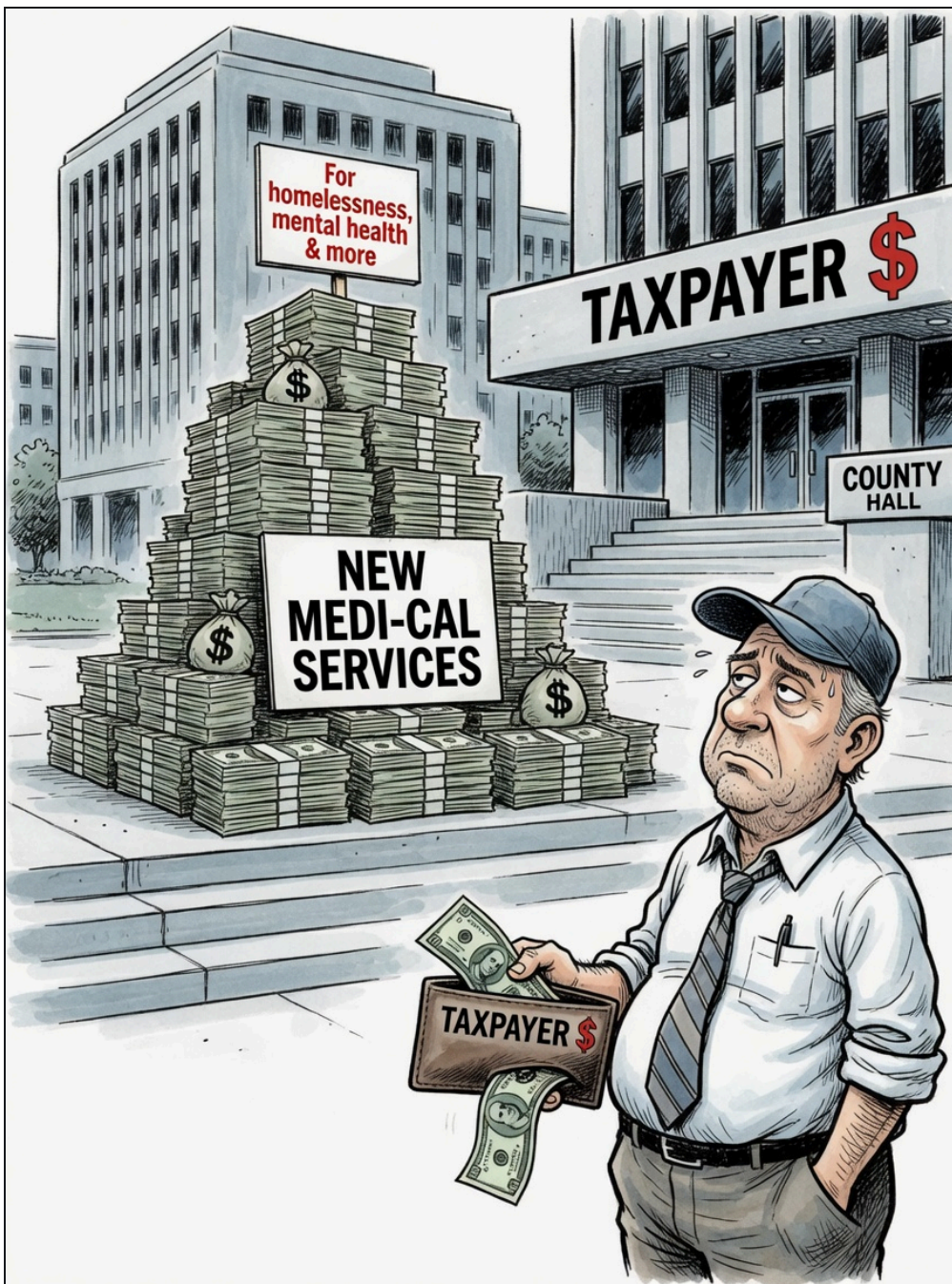
Community and leadership may be broad concepts, but community leadership is a distinct and vital practice. At the end of the day, we are all humans seeking connections, seeking meaning and looking for ways to make a difference. An that is what drives lasting, positive change.

Next week we celebrate those who’ve turned this idea into action at our 23 rd annual Visionary Awards . If it’s not already on your calendar, I hope you’ll join us to celebrate.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Sep 1, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



New Medi-Cal services for homelessness, mental health & more

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

Hayward's Budget Overruns Signal Deeper Fiscal Problems, Analyst Warns

Mark Moses of the California Policy Center says the Bay Area city must move beyond temporary patches to avoid worsening its financial troubles.

The California Policy Center argues that Hayward, the sixth-largest city in the Bay Area, has created its own financial troubles through poor budgeting practices.

According to the Center, city officials are letting down the roughly 162,000 residents who pay elevated taxes while depending on local government services.

At its meeting on June 17, 2025, the Hayward City Council approved the operating budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

The Center notes that the city's own budget papers showed spending for the 2024-25 fiscal year was expected to run \$8.5 million above the approved plan, reaching \$226.7 million instead of \$218.2 million.

The Center writes that this kind of overspending without

any major emergency represents an unacceptable violation of legal limits and raises doubts about the city's financial oversight and discipline.

Just ten weeks later, on August 29, the city released a statement projecting general fund spending at \$248 million for the year that ended June 30, 2025. That figure was \$21 million, or almost 10 percent, above the authorized level.

The Center points out that by early June, when officials were finalizing the new budget, finance staff already had spending data through April and payroll information through mid-May. That meant they had roughly 85 percent of the year's actual general fund costs available to forecast the full year's total.

Those accurate projections matter because they directly influence the reserve levels the city would carry into the new fiscal year starting July 1.

The Center observes that Hayward has provided no clear explanation for where the extra general fund money went. The city manager's statement mentioned higher staffing after the pandemic, labor contracts signed in 2023 and 2024, and an \$8.6 million loan to the Hayward

Economic Development Corporation.

None of those items, the Center argues, count as unexpected emergencies. Their costs should have been built into the original 2024-25 budget. The Center adds that whether such loans make sense is a separate question.

The Center acknowledges that budgeting mistakes can be fixed, yet a larger issue persists: getting the City Council to recognize how serious Hayward's financial situation has become.

The Center reports that the city has faced repeated budget shortfalls in recent years and earned a D grade on the Center's fiscal dashboard based on its latest audited statements.

One city leader reportedly said, "It's always worked out." The Center warns that similar comments have been made in other cities shortly before they declared fiscal emergencies or filed for Chapter 9 bankruptcy.

The Center cautions that Hayward cannot rely on superficial answers. Its August statement pointed to "vacancy management" as a way to improve finances. The Center calls this approach not

real management but an abdication of responsibility that leaves staffing to chance instead of strategic planning.

At a May 13 budget session, staff suggested steps such as finding ways to increase revenue, reviewing every program, deciding what counts as core services, and seeking input from employees, council members, and residents.

The Center contends that raising taxes is neither sustainable nor justified until the city confirms it is working within its proper role and delivering services efficiently. The Center notes that the inability to stay within approved budgets indicates clear room for improvement.

While evaluating programs and redefining core services appear useful, the Center says they will only help if officials apply a consistent standard. Instead, cities often give up at the first resistance and turn to higher taxes and fees.

The Center adds that community feedback is valuable only when the city provides current and accurate data. Transparency fails when the government itself lacks a clear picture of its operations, debts, and resources.

Mark Moses, a senior fellow

with the California Policy Center, urges the city to put in place a strict, open system for forecasting and accountability during its first review of the 2025-26 budget.

The Center concludes that treating serious budget cracks with surface-level repairs only creates a false sense of control. If leaders keep focusing on appearances rather than facts, they are not solving the crisis but continuing a pattern of decline that threatens the city's solvency, credibility, and ability to serve residents.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Sep 12, 2025

COMMENTARY

Policy Choices Fueling Enrollment Fraud in California Community Colleges, Argues California Policy Center

Marc Joffe of the California Policy Center argues that tuition-free policies and sanctuary rules have enabled widespread ghost student scams, costing taxpayers millions and crowding out legitimate learners.

California's community colleges face persistent and

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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

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Policy Choices Fueling Enrollment Fraud in California Community Colleges, Argues California Policy Center

growing enrollment fraud that drains public resources and disadvantages genuine students seeking to advance their education.

The author identifies two progressive policy priorities — providing tuition-free education and shielding undocumented immigrants from immigration enforcement — as having left the system especially susceptible to abuse.

While these approaches may appear idealistic, implementing them without strong verification has created conditions ripe for waste, fraud and abuse by lowering barriers for scammers.

Fraud was already present before the pandemic but surged during COVID-19 when remote instruction diminished oversight, allowing “ghost students” to enroll, claim financial aid and disappear without attending classes.

Unlike the selective University of California system, community colleges accept nearly all applicants,

making them attractive targets.

Fraudulent applications reportedly reached an estimated 20 percent by 2021, climbed to 25 percent by January 2024 and hit 34 percent by late 2024, with artificial intelligence enabling increasingly advanced schemes.

Reported financial losses run into the tens of millions of dollars, though the true figure may be higher because many fraudulent registrations go undetected.

Overall community college enrollment has declined sharply from a peak of 2.83 million students in 2008-09 to a pandemic low of about 1.83 million in 2020-21, with only a partial rebound to 2.1 million in 2023-24.

This downward trend, influenced by demographic changes and doubts about the value of higher education, may lessen administrators’ motivation to aggressively combat fraud.

By inflating enrollment numbers, ghost students can help institutions secure more state funding, which is tied to headcounts.

Programs such as the California College Promise Grant and California Promise

waive fees and tuition for many students, allowing Pell Grants of up to \$7,395 per year to be used for textbooks and living expenses with minimal scrutiny.

Sanctuary policies established by Senate Bill 54 in 2017 restrict cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, enabling undocumented individuals to access state grants with limited verification.

Pandemic-era federal rules that eased requirements for those submitting Free Applications for Federal Student Aid further compounded the problem.

Scammers incur no application or tuition costs, often using fake or AI-generated identities to obtain aid before vanishing.

Although colleges have begun deploying their own AI detection tools, many fraudulent enrollees still slip through and occupy classroom seats that real students need.

Online discussions about City College of San Francisco include one participant who observed, “They’re called ghost students and it’s a scam to collect financial aid. It’s f**ked because they sign up super early so actual students

can’t sign up and have to attend the first few classes hoping they can get credited for them,” highlighting how fraud blocks access to classes.

This pattern of abuse resembles other recent benefit fraud scandals in California, including massive unemployment insurance fraud during the pandemic that siphoned billions through fake claims, as well as fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program loans and Medicare-Medicaid scams.

These episodes stem from well-intentioned but loosely verified programs rushed into place during crises, which too often result in taxpayer losses.

As Dr. Jeannie Kim, president of Santiago Canyon College, noted in a California Insider interview, “1.2 million fake applicants applied last year to community colleges in California. And right now, there are a number of fake students out there in our community college system to the point where kids cannot take their classes because these fake students are taking their spots.”

To address the crisis, modest application and registration fees should be introduced so that would-be

fraudsters have financial skin in the game.

All students should be required to pay at least a small amount per credit, which fake enrollees would forfeit if dropped from classes, and in-person registration with identification should become the standard practice, with exceptions only for those with significant disabilities.

While free education for both documented and undocumented students may sound appealing, it is squandering scarce public funds and should be reserved for genuine students willing to appear in person, verify their identity and pay a modest fee for the opportunity.

Marc Joffe is a Visiting Fellow at California Policy Center.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Sep 17, 2025

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 sandiegonewslines.com.

MORE NEWS

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY
Horses Impounded from Local Ranch
The San Diego County Department of Animal Services executed a warrant today at a ranch on Artesian Road in North County following the death of a horse named Penny last month.

Animal Services Director Vaughn Maurice, Assistant Director Rachael Borrelli, Animal Control Lt. Lewis Peterson, Dr. Caitlin Manring of East County Large and Small Animal Practice and two San Diego County Sheriff’s deputies were at the ranch to evaluate all animals on the property. Two horses were found with low body condition scores and were

impounded for further examination and to ensure proper care.

“ Our animal care officers are committed to serving the County of San Diego for animal rescues, relinquishment, and animal cruelty or neglect investigations in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County,” said Maurice.

County Animal Services protects the health, safety and welfare of people and animals in its service area of unincorporated San Diego County. The department operates two shelters, caring for thousands of animals each year and matching them with forever families.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 12, 2025

COUNTY
Coches Fire Recovery Event Offers Support to Wildfire Victims
Residents in Lakeside directly impacted by the Coches Fire attended a recovery resource event at the San Diego County Library, Lakeside Branch Saturday afternoon. Government agencies, community groups and leaders from the Lakeside Fire Protection District were able to offer support and services needed to start the recovery process.

More than twenty community members, including some whose homes were lost came to get information about rebuilding permits, property tax relief, food and

healthcare programs, information about handling or removal of household or hazardous waste, replacement of vital documents, and coordination of volunteers to help.

The San Diego County Office of Emergency Services encourages all to take four steps to help prepare yourself and loved ones in the event of a wildfire or any emergency.

Review, update or create a Personal Disaster Plan for your home and family with important information you may need in the event of an emergency. A template is available at AlertSanDiego.org in 12 languages, with an additional disaster plan for people who may need assistance.

Register your cell phones for emergency alerts notifying communities of an emergency affecting your community.

Create an Evacuation Go-Kit and a Shelter-in-Place Kit including items for your pets. A checklist is available on AlertSanDiego.org.

Practice evacuating your household. The goal is to evacuate in 15 minutes or less.

Residents can stay informed by registering for AlertSanDiego.org and downloading the Genasys Protect app to receive critical information during a disaster.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 14, 2025

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