

# 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

# County Names Experienced Public Safety Leader to Head Office of Emergency Services



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

The County announced a new director of Emergency Services, who brings decades of fire protection and emergency management leadership experience.

Daryl Arbuthnott served the Los Angeles Fire Department for 36 years, rising to the rank of Fire Deputy Chief. He commanded several significant incidents including large-scale brush fires, high-rise, commercial buildings, swift water rescue emergencies, and special planned events. Arbuthnott then served the cities of Davis and Vallejo in Northern California as their Fire Chief. Most recently, he led the Emergency Management department at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Arbuthnott has a graduate degree in Risk Management, Business Continuity and Security from Boston University.

He begins his new role with the Office of Emergency Services Feb. 20.

The Office of Emergency Services coordinates regional emergency preparedness and response and supports recovery after a disaster , working with local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private sector partners to protect public health and safety.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 18, 2026

## COUNTY

### More Storms on the Way, Free Sandbags Available

With more and potentially heavy rains still forecasted this week, the County

and CAL FIRE are providing free bags and/or sand at numerous fire stations for people who live in the unincorporated areas.

Rain can cause flooding and erosion, particularly in areas that are not covered by plants, landscaping, grass and trees. Rain runoff can sweep topsoil, mud, plant material and debris off land and downstream where it can damage homes, clog culverts and storm drains, and flood and damage roadways. Properly placed sandbags can help protect your home from flooding and destructive runoff.

Sand and bags, or bags alone, will be available for unincorporated residents at the fire stations located below.

People should call ahead to double-check availability and remember to bring a shovel to fill the bags. Some stations may have a limited supply.

Bonita: Sunnyside Fire Station #38 ( Map ) 4900 Bonita Road, Bonita, CA 91902 P: 619-479-2346

Boulevard: Boulevard Fire Station #47 ( Map ) 40080 Ribbonwood Road, Boulevard, CA 91905 P: 619-390-2020

Dulzura: Dulzura Fire Station #30 ( Map ) 17304 Highway 94, Dulzura, CA 91917 P: 619-468-3391

De Luz: De Luz Fire Station #16 ( Map ) 39431 De Luz Road, Fallbrook, CA 92028 P: 760-728-2422

Fallbrook: Pala Mesa Fire Station #4 ( Map ) 4375 Pala Mesa Drive, Fallbrook, CA 92028 P: 760-723-2024

Julian: Cuyamaca Fire Station #56 ( Map ) 3407 Highway 79, Julian, CA 92036 P: 760-765-2885

Lakeside: Lakeside River Park Conservancy ( Map ) 12108 Industry Road, Lakeside 92040 P: 619-443-4770 Mon – Fri 7- 4:30, Sat. and Sun. (During major storms Sat and Sun 9-2. Bring your own shovel; 10 per household)

Potrero: Potrero Fire Station #31 (

Map ) 25130 Highway 94, Potrero, CA 91963 P: 619-478-5544

Ramona: Ramona Fire Station #82 ( Map ) 3410 Dye Road, Ramona, CA 92065 P: 760-788-2269 P: 760-789-0107

Spring Valley: Spring Valley Library ( Map ) 836 Kempton St., Spring Valley CA 91977 P: 619-463-3006

Valley Center: Valley Center Fire Station #2 ( Map ) 28205 N. Lake Wohlford Road, Valley Center, CA 92082 P: 760-751-7605

Warner Springs: Sunshine Summit Fire Station #59 ( Map ) 35227 Highway 79, Warner Springs, CA 92086 P: 760-782-9113

Alpine: Alpine Fire Station #17 ( Map ) 1364 Tavern Road, Alpine, CA 91901 P: 619-445-2635

Borrego Springs: Borrego Springs Fire Station #60 ( Map ) 2324 Stirrup Road, Borrego Springs, CA 92004 P: 760-767-5436

Borrego Springs: Borrego Springs – Ocotillo Wells Fire Station #61 ( Map ) 5841 Highway 78, Borrego Springs, CA 92004 P: 760-767-7430

Campo: Campo Fire Station #40 ( Map ) 31577 Highway 94, Campo, CA 91906 P: 619-478-5516

Campo: Campo – Lake Morena Fire Station #42 ( Map ) 29690 Oak Drive, Campo, CA 91906 P: 619-478-5960

Escondido: Deer Springs Fire Station #11 ( Map ) 8709 Circle R Dr, Escondido, CA 92026 P: 760-751-0802

Escondido: Deer Springs Fire Station #13 ( Map ) 10308 Meadow Glen Way E, Escondido, CA 92026 P: 760-751-0803

Descanso: Descanso Fire Station #45 ( Map ) 24592 Viejas Grade Road, Descanso, CA 91916 P: 619-445-7508

El Cajon: El Cajon – Harbison Canyon Fire Station #24 ( Map ) 551 Harbison Canyon Road, El Cajon, CA 92019 P:

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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More Storms on the Way, Free Sandbags Available

619-445-5001

El Cajon: El Cajon – Flinn Springs Fire Station #21 ( Map ) 9711 Flinn Springs Road, El Cajon, CA 92021 P: 619-443-7121

Escondido: Escondido – Miller Fire Station #15 ( Map ) 9127 W. Lilac Road, Escondido, CA 92025 P: 760-728-8532

Jacumba: Jacumba Fire Station #43 ( Map ) 1255 Jacumba Street, Jacumba, CA 91934 P: 619-766-4535

Jamul: Jamul – Deerhorn Fire Station #37 ( Map ) 2383 Honeysprings Road, Jamul, CA 91935 P: 619-468-3030

Jamul: Jamul Fire Station #36 ( Map ) 14024 Peaceful Valley Ranch Rd, Jamul, CA 91935 P: 619-669-6580

Jamul: Lyons Valley – Fire Station #32 ( Map ) 17759 Skyline Truck Trail, Jamul, CA 91935 P: 619-468-3435

Julian: Julian – Fire Station #50 ( Map ) 1587 Highway 78, Julian, CA 92036 P: 760-765-0511

Julian: Shelter Valley Fire Station #62 ( Map ) 7260 Great Southern Overland, Julian, CA 92036 P: 760-765-0155

Mount Laguna: Mount Laguna Fire Station #49 ( Map ) 33947 Mount Laguna Drive, Mt. Laguna, CA 91948 P: 619-473-8281

Pine Valley: Pine Valley Fire Station #44 ( Map ) 28850 Old Highway 80, Pine Valley, CA 91962 P: 619-578-6621

Ranchita: Ranchita Fire Station #58 ( Map ) 37370 Montezuma Valley Road, Ranchita, CA 92066 P: 760-782-3467 \*(Not staffed 24/7)

San Pasqual: San Pasqual Fire Station #84 ( Map ) 17701 San Pasqual Valley Road, Escondido, CA 92025 P: 858-573-1322

Warner Springs: Warner Springs Fire Station #52 ( Map ) 31049 Highway 79, Warner Springs, CA 92086 P: 760-782-3560

Residents are encouraged to visit AlertSanDiego.org for information about what they should do in case of an

emergency.

People can also check out this how-to video, “You’ve Got Your Sandbags, Now What?” that explains how to properly fill and use sandbags to protect your property.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 17, 2026

COUNTY

County Approves New Traffic Signals, Road Improvements and Filtration Project

The Board of Supervisors approved three major infrastructure projects to improve safety, mobility and sustainability in unincorporated communities: new traffic signals in Lakeside and Fallbrook, road upgrades in Valley Center and a stormwater filtration project in Fallbrook.

Supported by local planning groups, new signals will be installed at:

Lake Jennings Park Road & El Monte-Julian Avenue, Lakeside

Mission Road & Santa Margarita Drive, Fallbrook

Mission Road & Pepper Tree Lane, Fallbrook

With an anticipated cost of \$4.74 million, construction begins in Fall 2026, with completion expected by Spring 2027.

County Public Works operates a comprehensive traffic engineering program that helps keep roads safe and efficient. Services include establishing all traffic regulations, operating and maintaining traffic signals and streetlights, issuing traffic control and special event permits, and addressing traffic-related customer service concerns.

Any requests or recommendations—such as changes to traffic control, speed limits, stop signs, traffic signals, or parking regulations—require approval from the Board of Supervisors.

The County will invest \$27.25 million in the construction of Phase 1 of the Cole Grade Road Improvement Project, upgrading nearly one mile of roadway between Pauma Heights Road and Cool Valley

Road. Improvements include:

A multi-use trail along the west side of the road

A new bridge and improved culverts at Keys Creek just north of Cool Valley Road

Vegetated bioswales to capture and treat stormwater

An underground storm drain system to safely convey flows and prevent roadway flooding

Cole Grade Road serves as a primary emergency evacuation route and provides access to schools, tribal communities and the Valley Center Library.

Fallbrook will also see a \$7.7 million Green Streets project along South Mission Road between Mission Oaks Road and Ammunition Road. Features include:

Six biofiltration basins and 23 tree wells to capture and filter stormwater pollutants before discharge into the San Luis Rey River tributary

New trees for shade and air quality improvements, supporting the County’s Climate Action Plan canopy expansion goals

Green Streets projects reduce pollutants, enhance aesthetics, and promote sustainability. The County has completed eight such projects and has 11 more planned.

At-a-glance, County Public Works currently maintains:

Almost 2,000 centerline miles of roadways

County of San Diego news release · Feb 12, 2026

COUNTY

How to Get Ready for the Storm Heading Our Way

San Diego County is expecting a second storm to bring rain, wind and snow to our communities beginning early Wednesday morning. County residents are reminded to follow a few simple steps to prepare for emergencies. Storms across San Diego County can lead to flooding, power outages or wildfires due to severe wind, dangerous road conditions and closures, or it could even damage water lines.

An emergency plan is key to any hazard from wildfires

to storms to earthquakes. The County Office of Emergency Services has a free Personal Disaster Plan template available in 12 languages. It guides people to gather important phone numbers and information, emergency supplies needed in the event of an evacuation, and how to contact each other if not together.

The template also includes other helpful information on things to do around the house to further prepare for weather or other emergencies. The plan should be reviewed every year and everyone in the family should be familiar with it and practice evacuating in 15 minutes or less.

Emergency Services encourages all to register for Emergency Alerts at AlertSanDiego.org, the County’s emergency notification system. In an emergency, it can make phone calls or send texts or internet phone calls or American Sign Language videos with English voice and text to homes and businesses, but to get a call or message sent to a mobile phone, residents have to register. People can stay informed through local resources to help you assess the emergency situation, weather and the current or projected conditions.

Genasys Protect provides information on evacuations or zones affected by an emergency. The free mobile app can be downloaded in the Apple store or in the Google Play store.

Follow official social media accounts, or to the websites of CAL FIRE , the National Weather Service San Diego , San Diego Sheriff’s Office or other law enforcement for cities, the California Highway Patrol and San Diego County Department of Public Works for County roads . Official accounts provide confirmed information.

Visit AlertSanDiego.org for information on incidents as well as preparedness tips, where to get sandbags, links to fire detection cameras and more resources.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 17, 2026

COUNTY

County Launches Aging Dashboard to Support Older Adults

The County launched a new Aging Dashboard this week, providing the public and policymakers an interactive way to track key metrics impacting the region’s growing population of older adults.

Modeled after California’s Master Plan for Aging , the dashboard features data on more than 50 indicators related to housing, health, inclusion and equity, caregiving, and affordability.

“These indicators help serve as guideposts for understanding trends and identifying opportunities to improve the quality of life and social drivers of health for older adults, people 60 years or older,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, M.D., M.P.H., County public health officer.

“The Aging Dashboard is an important step in ensuring that our programs and policies meet the needs of San Diego County’s growing senior population,” said Allison Boyer, County director of Aging & Independence Services (AIS). “It gives us the data we need to plan effectively and promote equity.”

The number of adults aged 60 and older in San Diego County is projected to increase to more than 824,500 by 2029.

The dashboard is available on the Community Health Statistics Unit website, offering interactive charts and insights to the region’s aging population. It also highlights the County’s efforts to support healthy aging.

For resources and assistance for older adults, people with disabilities and their families, call the AIS Call Center at 1-800-339-4661.

The dashboard reflects the County’s commitment to supporting older adults and aligns with the Aging Roadmap , a strategic guide for creating age-friendly communities.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 12, 2026

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BUSINESS  
Member Spotlight –  
Big Blue Photo  
Expeditions

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DBA Big Blue Whale Watch  
Captain/CEO Susan Scheer  
and Captain/Naturalist  
Matthias Scheer  
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Running year round out of  
Seaforth Marina in Mission  
Bay, Big Blue Whale Watch  
conducts whale watching and  
ocean adventures year round.  
This business was built on a  
enduring love of the incredi-  
ble marine wildlife that exists

right off the shores of San  
Diego, and a desire to share  
the greatest creatures on the  
planet. Timeless gray whale  
migrations, world-class blue  
whale encounters, and even  
orcas await those who join us  
on our expeditions.

Each trip is designed for  
those who want a close, ful-  
filling encounter with the  
wildlife of the Pacific. As a  
team of filmmakers and  
trained marine biologists, we  
strive to put people in the  
best place to see the world’s  
greatest creatures in the best  
light; both above and below  
the water. For those who  
want an immersive experi-  
ence, we offer snorkeling in  
the open ocean with some of  
the world’s largest bony  
fishes.

All tours are kept small and  
personal, with a maximum of  
6 people per boat. That means  
no crowds, just clear views  
and intimate encounters. Our  
boats are designed for stabil-  
ity, comfort, and power, so  
you won’t miss a moment .  
Every seat offers easy access  
to the breathtaking sights of

the ocean, and we personally  
conduct every charter.

Our mission is to protect  
and safeguard our oceans. We  
often work with NOAA to help  
monitor entangled whales  
and injured marine wildlife  
via photo and drone technol-  
ogy. We’ve been privileged to  
work and produce films with  
CBS, National Geographic,  
and the Discovery Channel.  
Above everything else, we  
strive to show everyone who  
joins us the wonder that ex-  
ists right off our shores.  
Because we protect what we  
love.

San Diego Regional Chamber of  
Commerce news release · Feb 12, 2026

BUSINESS  
Member Spotlight –  
David Allen Capital  
Inc.

For those who don’t already  
know me, I am pleased to be  
celebrating over two decades  
of involvement with the  
chamber in many different  
roles from Chamber member  
and ambassador to Chamber  
employee and even vendor.

What an awesome experience  
it has been to participate in  
and serve the local business  
community through such a  
fine organization!

Rolling into 2026 it is my  
pleasure to feature a key solu-  
tion sought by members for  
years; ready access to work-  
ing capital. “Ready access”  
means no collateral is needed  
and funds are disbursed  
within days—not weeks—of  
submitting a short applica-  
tion. No tax returns are  
needed, there are no fees to  
apply. We ask for only a few  
recent bank statements.  
Applying is so easy because  
we think business owners are  
ROCK STARS and have better  
things to do!

With today’s cutting edge  
technology, a request for a  
loan or credit line can be  
shopped through multiple  
funding institutions almost  
instantly. Approvals are  
quick, and there is no obliga-  
tion to accept the resulting of-  
fers. What a relief to the local  
business looking to expand  
their footprint, get through  
an inevitable small business

“pinch” or check for available  
credit limits.

With loan amounts from  
\$20k up to \$2 million, the  
team at David Allen Capital,  
Inc. specialize in funding  
small/medium businesses  
when the big banks can’t. We  
even partner with select  
banks and credit unions on a  
referral basis, as they can’t al-  
ways grant credit that we love  
to fund , and we don’t offer  
checking accounts, a win-  
win-win for all!

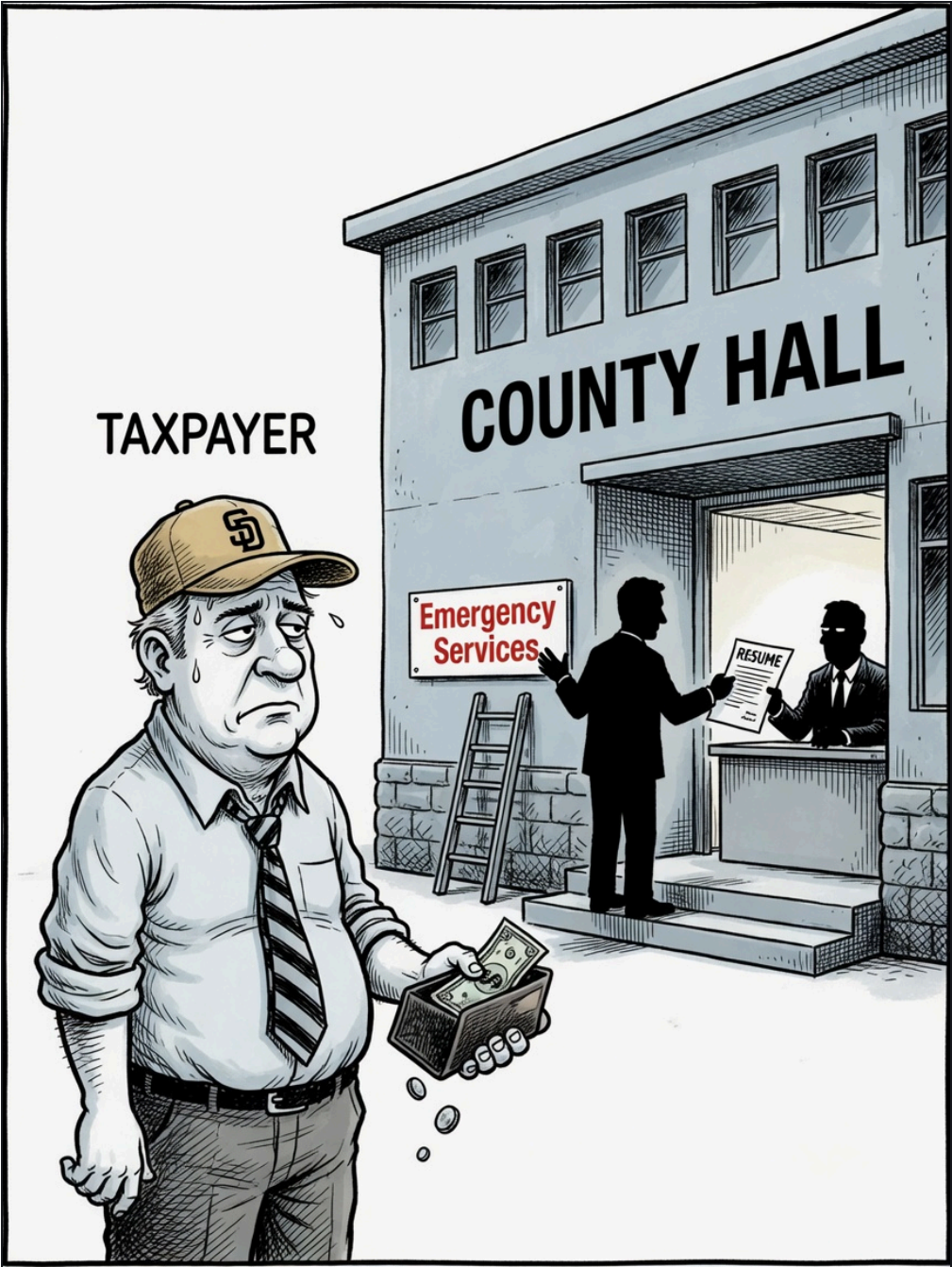
I could not be happier to  
present this valuable service  
to the San Diego business  
community.

Please reach out via my es-  
tablished cell and email ad-  
resses, if only to catch up. I  
remain at your service!

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San Diego Regional Chamber of  
Commerce news release · Jan 29, 2026

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON



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COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

California’s Healthcare Industrial Complex Booms While Taxpayers and Families Foot the Bill

*The California Policy Center argues that hospitals, executives and unions are thriving in a self-reinforcing cycle funded largely by public money and caregivers’ wages.*

California’s hospitals recorded \$11.3 billion in total net income in 2024 — 10% above pre-pandemic levels, according to the California Policy Center.

The average hospital chief executive in the state earns about \$920,000 annually, the Center notes, while some leaders receive far more.

Cedars-Sinai’s CEO received \$5.7 million in compensation, and UCLA’s Ronald Reagan Medical Center paid its CEO \$1.9 million, even though it is a public hospital.

Nationally, HCA’s chief executive earned \$23.8 million,

producing a 391-to-1 pay ratio compared with the median employee, the Center reports.

The California Policy Center writes that lavish executive compensation has become common even though the Lown Institute found no correlation between high CEO pay and improved community health outcomes.

Many of the nation’s best-performing hospitals pay their leaders below the average for their peers, according to the Center.

The commentary also examines the role of the Service Employees International Union, which collected \$114.5 million in dues in 2024 from 246,113 dues-paying members.

That works out to an average of \$465 per member, the Center calculates.

Only 16 cents of every dues dollar went to representational activities, while \$40.7 million was sent to SEIU national headquarters, \$4.5

million supported political activities and lobbying, and \$1.9 million funded contributions and grants.

Union officers received substantial salaries, with the president earning \$306,000, one executive vice president paid \$271,000 and another paid \$249,000, the Center reports.

The commentary focuses heavily on the unionization of In-Home Supportive Services workers, a \$28.5 billion state program that pays caregivers, who are often family members caring for elderly parents or disabled children at home.

These caregivers have no traditional workplace, no shop floor and cannot strike without abandoning their loved ones, the Center observes.

Yet SEIU Local 2015 claims to represent more than 500,000 long-term care workers, though not all pay dues after the Supreme Court’s

Harris v. Quinn decision barred mandatory payments.

The union holds \$142 million in cash and \$168 million in total assets, according to its filings cited by the Center.

The commentary notes that because union dues are tied to wages, every state-mandated pay increase automatically boosts union revenue.

Dues rose from \$93.5 million in 2022 to \$114.5 million in 2024 as a result of higher wages from mandated raises, the Center writes.

This creates what the Center describes as a self-perpetuating cycle: higher wages generate higher dues, which finance more political activity, which leads to further mandated raises.

The California Policy Center acknowledges that caregivers deserve fair compensation but argues that Californians should see the full picture.

Hospitals are recording billions in income and

executives are collecting millions while the union spends 84 cents of every dues dollar on activities other than workplace representation, the Center contends.

Patients, taxpayers and the caregivers themselves, the commentary concludes, deserve to ask whether they are getting their money’s worth from California’s booming healthcare industrial complex.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Feb 12, 2026

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 sandiegonewsline.com.

MORE NEWS

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY

Valentine’s Day Weddings – A County Labor of Love

Planning a wedding can take months. Now imagine getting ready for more than 150 weddings all in a single day.

That’s exactly what the County is doing as it gears up for an influx of Valentine’s Day ceremonies tomorrow.

Planning began back in September 2025. Valentine’s Day is one of the busiest — and happiest — days of the year for the Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk’s (ARCC) office.

Employees can’t help but get into the spirit of it all.

Valentine’s Day is one of the busiest days of the year for the Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk’s (ARCC) office. And one of the happiest. Employees can’t help but get into the spirit of it all.

“We’re excited,” said Recorder/County Clerk Assistant Division Chief Denisse Levy.

Last year, Valentine’s Day fell on a Friday, and ARCC conducted 175 weddings across five offices. This year, with the holiday landing on a

Saturday, the County will open its most popular location — the historic County Administration Center, featuring marriage rooms and outdoor arbors overlooking San Diego Bay.

Demand is high. Appointments opened Dec. 27 and the initial slots 82 slots were gone by Jan. 20. The County expanded to 120, then 165 appointments. As of Friday, only seven appointments remain.

To make the day special, ARCC staff will:

Issue marriage licenses and officiate ceremonies

Provide marriage certificates on the spot (instead of the usual 7–10 day wait)

Offer free parking at the Ash Street garage

Coordinate with vendors for treats, flowers, and Valentine’s-themed coffee

Partner with the Larry Himmel Foundation to give away 20 free weddings —10 first-come, first-served and 10 via radio promotions

Couples without appointments can still walk in for a ceremony until the building closes at 5 p.m. Behind the scenes, employees are setting

up counters, chairs, tents, overflow rooms, and decorations to handle 15–20 weddings per hour.

“I tell myself to have fun,” says Levy. “Getting married is really special and I’m glad we get to be a part of that.”

On average, the office issues nearly 25,000 marriage licenses and conducts more than 11,000 weddings each year. Nearly half of customers who request a marriage license also hold their wedding ceremonies at an ARCC office.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 13, 2026

LEGAL NOTICES

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