

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

New Children's Crisis Care Facility Breaks Ground in Kearny Mesa



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The County of San Diego broke ground today on a new Children's Crisis Residential Care facility in Kearny Mesa that will be a first of its kind locally and fill a critical gap in the children's system of care.

The construction involves a full remodel of an existing 10,000 - square - foot building and will be complete in late 2027. When the facility opens in early 2028, local youth experiencing a behavioral health crisis will have access to a welcoming and supportive 24/7 treatment center.

The Behavioral Health Services Children's Crisis Residential Care (CCRC) facility will operate as a short-term residential program. Once operational, the CCRC is expected to offer up to 16 beds and serve approximately 350 youth and families each year.

As a regional resource, the CCRC will expand local capacity for children's crisis care and support equitable access to essential behavioral health care by serving Medi-Cal eligible children and youth.

Services will include timely mental health assessments, individualized treatment, stabilization and warm hand-offs to ongoing care. The purpose is to reduce unnecessary transfers and keep children connected to the support they need.

The \$10.8 million County infrastructure investment is funded largely through the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) along with other federal and state grants.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 25, 2026



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COUNTY

New Tool Makes Applying for Benefits Faster and Easier

A new BenefitsCal feature called Truv now helps CalFresh, CalWORKs, Medi-Cal and County General Relief applicants save time, reduce paperwork and avoid mailing costs. The tool launched July 20, 2026, and verifies income and employment electronically during the e-application process.

When applying through BenefitsCal, customers can securely sign in to their employer, payroll provider or financial institution. Truv uses secure, encrypted channels, and no information is shared outside the County of San Diego.

If the employer participates in Truv, the system automatically pulls available income and employment information. Applicants can then review and confirm the information before submitting their application.

"With Truv, it is easy for customers to opt in while applying through the on-line application tool BenefitsCal app," said Alberto Banuelos, Interim Director of County Self Sufficiency Services. "It is a win-win, helping our customers save time and money and staff manage higher workloads."

Using Truv means customers don't need to search for documents, manually enter income details or pay postage to mail paperwork. It also reduces the chance of manually entered errors.

CalFresh reviews can take up to 30 days.

Medi-Cal reviews can take up to 45 days.

When income information is verified upfront, processing time can be shortened, helping eligible households get connected to critical resources faster.

Self-Sufficiency Services supports more than 1.2 million San Diego County residents by providing access to essential public safety net programs. With customer-focused tools, multilingual help and community partnerships, Self - Sufficiency Services works to make applying for benefits easier, faster and more accessible. Our mission is simple: to help people stay healthy, safe and on a path toward long - term self - sufficiency.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 20, 2026

COUNTY

County Announces Actions, Leadership Transition After Release of Misconduct Claims in Behavioral Health Services

The County is making changes as a result of investigations into misconduct to ensure integrity, equity and accountability in our work, including serving some of our most vulnerable residents.

The County is releasing the findings publicly.

"These substantiated claims do not reflect the County's values, my values as a leader and the expectations I have for our executive team and our employees," said County of San Diego Chief Administrative Officer Ebony Shelton. "All inappropriate actions including racism and sexism are absolutely unacceptable and have no place at the County, and we will expect the highest standards of service to uphold public trust."

Once made aware, current County executive leadership called for a closer examination of processes to strengthen

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

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County Announces Actions, Leadership Transition After Release of Misconduct Claims in Behavioral Health Services

expectations around decision-making, accountability and leadership conduct. Shelton acknowledges the dedicated work of County employees who serve the

community and the significant progress that’s been made to date through training, communication, organizational structure and resources.

Results of this examination prompted a leadership change in Behavioral Health Services. Experienced Health and Human Services Agency executive Jennifer Bransford-Koons will help lead the

department on a temporary basis after the departure of Director Nadia Privara. A transition plan is being developed to ensure all services continue without disruption as the hiring process for the new leader is conducted.

The misconduct was discovered and investigated through reports to the County’s Office of Ethics, Compliance and Labor

Standards. The County anticipates additional substantiated findings and will address them under the same standard of accountability.

These findings exist because County employees reported the conduct. Reporting worked. Employees and the public are encouraged to continue to report concerns, including sexual harassment,

Courts · Transit · Public safety

discrimination, racism, waste, fraud and abuse.

Reports can be made confidentially 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the County’s Ethics Hotline at 866-549-0004 as well as online, and to the District Attorney’s Office Public Integrity Unit.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 25, 2026

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



Illustration from a photo by Adbar · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

BUSINESS

The Business Case for Immigration Reform

Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President Jessica Anderson participated in a panel discussion titled “The Business of Immigration: Ethics, Economics, and the Future of our Region,” hosted by the San Diego World Affairs Council and OneSD. As part of the Engage San Diego: Tough Topics, Real Discussion series, the panel explored how immigration influences San Diego’s economy, policies, and long-term success of the CaliBaja region.

Jessica shared highlights on the Chamber’s advocacy efforts to advance comprehensive immigration reform and oppose aggressive enforcement practices that create fear and disrupt our communities. Efforts include support for H.R. 7961 by Representative Lawler, which exempts physicians and essential health workers from \$100K H1-B visas, and support for H.R. 5973 by Representative Peters, which aims to reduce reliance on unpredictable enforcement approaches which undermine stability for employers and workers.

Additional advocacy efforts include coalition letters on requirements for temporary protected status, asylum seekers, and DACA recipients, as well as advancing visas for international students. For decades, the Chamber has advocated for comprehensive immigration reform. Providing a standardized, legal, and safe pathway to

citizenship is crucial to workforce availability and providing businesses with the talent they need to grow and compete. Recognizing that 1 out of 3 members of our workforce in San Diego and across California is an immigrant, and the immigrant community contributes to nearly one-third of our region’s GDP, the Chamber will remain a steady voice for immigration reforms that strengthen our binational region.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Aug 21, 2026

BUSINESS

County Advocacy Roundup: Border, Energy, and Small Business Issues

The County Board of Supervisors returned from recess this month and considered several items affecting Chamber member businesses:

Board Votes to End ICE and CBP Facility Contracts

Supervisors Lawson-Remer and Aguirre brought forward a board letter to end contracts with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), previously allowing both agencies access to firearm training facilities. The Chamber has been a long proponent of comprehensive immigration reform and formally opposes aggressive enforcement practices that create fear, destabilize the workforce, and terrorize and sow division within our communities.

VP of International and Public Affairs, Kenia Zamarripa, urged the Board to maintain the contract with CBP specifically. The agency warned that losing access to training facilities nearby would drive officers away from ports of entry for longer periods, resulting in an increase in border wait times, potential closure of lanes across ports of entry and shut down PedWest, and an end of

pilot programs. Any policies that result in longer wait times and impact port operations would also disrupt cross-border supply chains that support 95,000 regional jobs and add to an already devastating \$2B annual economic loss caused by existing border waits.

The Chamber was joined by Cross Border Xpress, business stakeholders, and CBP Field Operations Director Sidney Aki in raising concerns about the impacts of this proposal. The Board ultimately voted 3-2 to end both contracts, with Supervisors Anderson and Desmond voting against the proposal. Following the decision, San Diego County Sheriff Kelly Martinez released a statement announcing that ICE had been notified that the agency will no longer be permitted to use Sheriff’s facilities for training. However, in acknowledgement of stakeholders’ concerns, Sheriff Martinez stated that the community will not be well-served by eliminating CBP’s use of the facilities because of the impacts at the border such as wait times and pollution.

County Hears Presentation on Golden Pacific Powerlink Project

The County also received a presentation on the effects of the Golden Pacific Powerlink Project on the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

International & Policy Advisor Myriam Mendoza spoke in support of the project, which was identified by the California Independent System Operator as an important investment in infrastructure needed to support the state’s clean energy goals. The Chamber has also provided a letter in support of the project to the City of Temecula, as it will strengthen grid reliability during high demand periods, promote access to lower-cost

renewable energy, and create economic benefits including construction-phase jobs and local investment. In addition, Chamber President and CEO Chris Cate issued a letter to the editor published by the UT highlighting how our business community depends on reliable electricity. The project must still be considered through a formal state approval process overseen by the California Public Utilities Commission, which will include environmental review, public comment periods, and formal proceedings.

Right to Cure Legislation Fails to Advance

The Board of Supervisors also considered an item brought forward by Supervisor Desmond that would have added support for right to cure legislation into the County’s Legislative Platform. Right to cure legislation allows businesses to correct ADA violations they have unknowingly committed before they are subject to litigation. Some of these violations are incredibly minute, including things like a handrail being inches higher or lower than required. Certain predatory trial attorneys make it a common practice to target businesses, especially small businesses, with frivolous ADA suits in order to get settlement money. There has not been broad California legislation establishing a right to cure, but SB 84 (Niello) would have created a 120-day right to cure period. The bill unfortunately died this year in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

Chamber Director of Public Affairs Evan Strawn spoke in support of right to cure legislation and encouraged the County to broadly support it in its Legislative Platform. Unfortunately, the Board’s Democratic majority, despite voicing support for right to cure, had outstanding concerns with SB 84 and other

legislation, and was unwilling to take the commonsense step of adding support for right to cure to the County’s Legislative Platform. Supervisor Desmond’s motion failed 2-3, with Supervisor Anderson also supporting. We encourage the County to prove in future legislative advocacy that it supports its small business community.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Aug 21, 2026

BUSINESS

Chamber, Rep. Peters Sound Alarm on DACA Delays

On July 29, Rep. Scott Peters convened business, labor, and community leaders to urge the Trump Administration to process Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) renewal applications in a timely manner. Delays at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) have slowed renewal processing time to almost double what it used to be.

Recent and proposed immigration policies have impacted the cost of healthcare, groceries, rent, and electricity. Renewal delays threaten the livelihoods of legal immigrants and put undue stress on businesses who are faced with uncertainty as their valued employees await decisions about their status. In San Diego alone, Dreamers, including DACA recipients, contribute \$968 million annually to the local economy.

DACA must be renewed every two years, and work authorizations cannot be renewed until DACA status is renewed.

A livestream recording of the press conference can be viewed here. Additional photos from the event, courtesy of the office of Rep. Scott Peters, can be viewed here.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Aug 21, 2026

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AROUND CALIFORNIA

Statewide news

CALIFORNIA
San Diego Sheriff Restricts ICE Access to Local Facilities Over Community Concerns

Sheriff Kelly Martinez cited community trust as central to local policing after barring federal agents from using sheriff’s facilities for training or qualifications, prompting criticism from acting ICE Director David J. Venturella.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego County Sheriff Kelly Martinez has decided that ICE agents may no longer use sheriff’s department facilities for training or firearms qualifications.

The sheriff pointed to community concerns as a factor in the decision. She stated that “Community trust and strong relationships are the cornerstone of effective local policing.”

Acting ICE Director David J. Venturella criticized the move.

“Politics should never interfere with law enforcement training,” Venturella said. “San Diego County’s decision to deny ICE officers access to facilities where they have trained for years puts politics ahead of public safety.”

Venturella added that ICE officers “carry out dangerous law enforcement operations every day, and rigorous, continuous training is essential to keeping our officers and the public safe.”

He further noted, “Local officials may disagree with federal immigration law, but deliberately making it more difficult for federal law enforcement officers to train safely serves no one.”

The source article's author

argued that the decision creates further divide with law enforcement agencies and that the cornerstone of effective local policing is stopping criminals.

One commenter on the article stated that a sheriff's duty is to enforce the law, that California law is anti-ICE, and that San Diego is a sanctuary city, adding that the law would need to change for greater cooperation.

The source article's author expressed support for ICE agents and stated that politics should not interfere with the common goal of law and order.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Aug 25, 2026

CALIFORNIA
Senate Democrats Reject Measure to Bar Certain Convicted Sex Offenders from Public Office

A bill that passed the Assembly unanimously was amended in the Senate to exempt specific sex crimes against 14-to-17-year-olds from the definition of disqualifying sexual assault, prompting Republican senators to criticize the changes as creating a loophole for those convicted of offenses against minors.

California taxpayers and families may soon face the prospect of certain convicted sex offenders holding elected positions after Senate Democrats amended a bill intended to bar people with some serious criminal convictions from state or local office.

The legislation, known as the Public Trust Protection

Act, originally sought to disqualify individuals convicted of felony sexual assault or human trafficking from running for or holding such offices.

It passed the Assembly by a 67-0 vote in early July. In the Senate Elections Committee, chaired by Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), amendments were made on June 24, 2026, that added exemptions.

The changes exempt adults convicted of felony sodomy, oral copulation or sexual penetration against minors aged 14 to 17 from the bill's disqualification, even in cases where the perpetrator is over 21 and the victim is 14 or 15.

According to the California Family Council, the bill defines sexual assault to include crimes like rape, sodomy, oral copulation and sexual penetration. But the amendments exclude three of those when committed against a 14-to-17-year-old.

The same acts against an adult or a child under 14 would still count as sexual assault and bar the person from office, but those against a minor 14 to 17 would not.

Sen. Steven Choi (R-Irvine) cast the only no vote in the committee. He stated, "The recent amendments of this bill added an exemption to allow adults convicted of molesting children to be eligible to run for public office."

Choi added, "Before being amended, AB 2691 would have prohibited child groomers and pedophiles from being eligible to run. I questioned the author at the hearing why we would give these monsters an exemption and she couldn’t explain. That’s unacceptable."

The amendments further limited the bill to cover only Tier 3 sex offenders, who are required to register for life, entirely excluding Tier 1 and Tier 2 offenders.

Sen. Suzette Valladares (R-Santa Clarita) introduced amendments to restore the original broader language and close the loophole. Senate Democrats rejected her amendments.

Valladares stated, "Right now, a registered sex offender can run for school board in California. Nothing in state law stops them. A bill to fix that, AB 2753, passed the Assembly 60-0. Then Senate Democrats killed it in committee, and advanced a different bill carving out an exception for people convicted of sex crimes against children."

She stated, "Predators who sexually abuse children have no place holding public office. None. Not in the Capitol, not on City Council, and definitely not on our school boards."

Valladares added, "AB 2691 originally did what common sense demands: bar convicted criminals, including sex offenders from holding public office. Then Sacramento Democrats gutted the bill’s protections and created a loophole so large that people convicted of heinous crimes against children can still run for office and serve in positions of public trust, including on school boards."

She stated, "Sacramento Democrats deliberately wrote these exemptions into the bill. They had the opportunity today to fix it and restore real protection for our communities. They rejected it.

Once again, Sacramento is choosing criminals over the families and victims it is supposed to protect."

Valladares stated, "Convicted sex offenders don’t get to hold public office. Period. These are not minor offenses. These are among the most heinous crimes one person can commit against another, many of them crimes against children. Sacramento Democrats have deliberately carved out a loophole that lets these individuals serve on your city council, your school board, or in your state legislature."

She warned, "Someone convicted of sodomizing, orally copulation, or sexually penetrating a minor, would remain eligible to run for and hold public office in California, including on local school boards. That’s not oversight. That’s a choice."

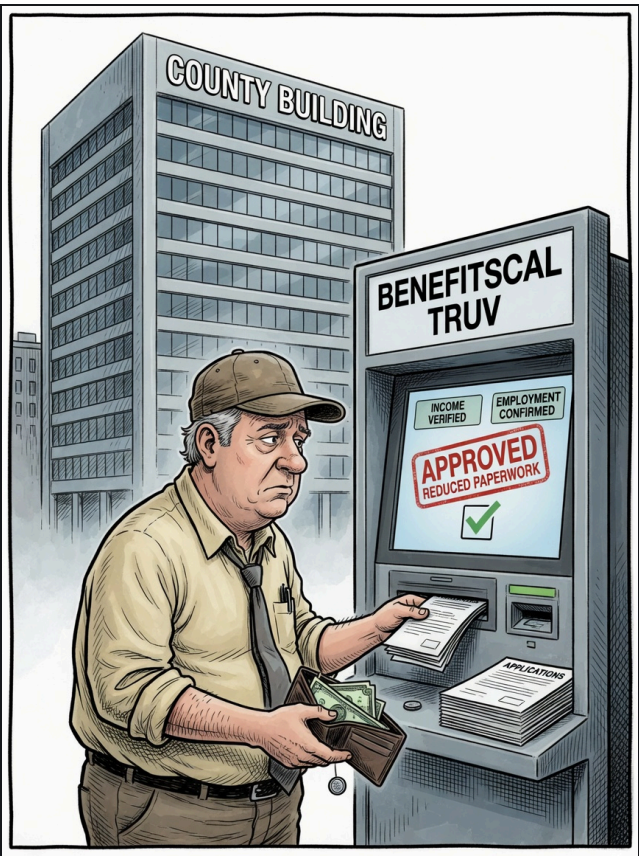
Valladares pledged, "I will not stop fighting until every sex offender is barred from holding public office in California. No loopholes. No carve-outs. No exceptions. Californians deserve elected officials they can trust, and that starts with making sure the people holding office have not committed crimes against children. This fight is not over."

The bill now advances with the exemptions, following a pattern seen in earlier legislation such as SB 145, signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2020, which adjusted requirements for certain sex offenses involving minors.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Aug 25, 2026

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



Faster, easier benefit applications

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

AB 1383 Represents Another Costly Error on Pensions, Warns Policy Expert

John Moorlach argues that the proposed bill to boost retirement benefits for public safety workers without new funding will burden taxpayers and repeat past fiscal disasters.

California lawmakers appear ready to repeat an expensive pension policy blunder that Moorlach warns could saddle future residents with higher taxes and reduced services.

Moorlach, senior fellow and director of the Center for Public Accountability at the California Policy Center, warns that Assembly Bill 1383 would grant public safety personnel earlier retirement options along with larger payments while cutting the share they must contribute.

The legislation offers no additional resources to offset these expanded commitments, which Moorlach warns would further strain the California Public Employees’ Retirement System and local government finances.

Moorlach draws on his experience as chair of the Orange County Board of

Supervisors in 2012, when he and other officials met with former governors Pete Wilson, Gray Davis and George Deukmejian to examine how shifting inmates to county facilities affected local safety and budgets.

At that gathering, his attention centered on the damaging effects of Senate Bill 400, which Gov. Davis approved in 1999 and which sharply raised expenses for public safety staff.

That earlier measure delivered a 50 percent boost to defined-benefit retirement plans applied retroactively, dramatically inflating expenses for every locality managing a pension program.

The outcome forced widespread reductions and staff cuts across counties, Moorlach recalls.

After the discussion, Gov. Davis delivered a candid admission: “If I knew then what I know now, I would never have signed SB 400.”

Moorlach notes that Davis could not have foreseen the complete financial toll because the proposal relied on dubious actuarial estimates, relied on financing tricks, and underwent major changes voted on within days.

During the hurried process, oversight groups were sidelined while revisions were prepared with heavy union influence.

Then-CalPERS president William Crist declared that SB 400 would not cost “a dime of additional taxpayer money.”

The severe consequences of that law prompted the Legislature to approve and Gov. Jerry Brown to enact the California Public Employees’ Pension Reform Act of 2013, known as PEPRA, to curb runaway expenses and restore order.

In 2016, joint reporting by the Los Angeles Times and CalMatters confirmed that the measure once presented to residents as budget-neutral had instead generated billions in extra pension obligations.

A decade afterward, local governments across the state struggle under heavy annual payments for defined-benefit plans.

Moorlach points out that Costa Mesa now directs one dollar out of every five in its budget toward CalPERS, with many other communities facing similar pressures.

These obligations shrink resources for core public

functions and produce what he terms “service insolvency” throughout state and local agencies.

Despite this history, Moorlach says Sacramento leaders are again weighing a similar unwise expansion of retirement benefits for safety workers via AB 1383.

He questions whether they have absorbed any lessons from prior missteps or are simply disregarding the numbers.

Moorlach urges lawmakers to halt the practice of altering statutory retirement formulas to prevent another disaster like SB 400 from a quarter-century ago.

Instead, Moorlach warns, AB 1383 would reduce the retirement age and permit the PEPRA rule requiring many workers to cover about half their pension costs to be bargained away in private sessions.

This approach places greater loads on residents without openness or oversight, he argues.

Moorlach predicts that once improved terms are extended to safety personnel, additional employee groups will demand matching conditions, ultimately leaving taxpayers responsible.

He insists that any changes to pension structures must occur with full public visibility and accountability rather than through private arrangements with officials whose campaigns receive major support from the very unions promoting the measure.

The bill has advanced to the Senate, where Moorlach says it should be promptly rejected, particularly given the multibillion-dollar shortfalls forecast by the Legislative Analyst’s Office for the current year and beyond.

Should legislators pass AB 1383 to Gov. Gavin Newsom, the governor ought to reject it to prevent it from becoming a lasting weight on California residents for decades and a hindrance to his own future political goals.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Aug 21, 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

COUNTY

It’s Really Hot Out There, Here Are Tips to Stay Safe in Extreme Heat

And when the heat is extreme — which can happen in the summer and even fall months in San Diego County — it can be dangerous for people and pets.

It can also increase levels of hydrogen sulfide emissions and odors that can affect people living and working in the South Bay, particularly around the Tijuana River Valley.

So, here are some tips to help you, your friends, loved ones and pets stay safe when the temperatures spike.

Extreme heat can cause body temperatures to soar. And that can cause heatstroke, exhaustion, dizziness, nausea, confusion, headache and even death. People who are particularly at risk are children, older adults, people with chronic medical conditions, someone who is pregnant, and outdoor workers.

Here are some tips to help you, your friends and loved ones stay safe.

Cool Zones and Indoor Relief — Places to Stay Cool

The County’s Cool Zones, including the County’s 33 branch libraries , community centers and other locations, offer people safe, air-conditioned sanctuaries from the heat. Here is a complete list of County Cool Zone sites , their hours and locations.

You can also use the County’s interactive link that lets you search for Cool Zone sites by location, ZIP code, organization and by what animals are allowed.

What to DO if Someone Shows Signs of Heatstroke

Call 9-1-1 immediately. Signs of heatstroke include dizziness, nausea, confusion and headache.

Begin cooling the person right away. Move them into the shade; spray them with cool water and fan them.

If they are alert, place them in a cool shower and monitor their body temperatures.

DO NOT give them fluids; a person with heatstroke may not be able to swallow safely.

What to DO if Someone Shows Signs of Heat Exhaustion

Signs include being faint or dizzy, excessive sweating, cool/pale/clammy skin, nausea/vomiting, rapid/weak pulse and muscle cramps.

Get the person to a cooler, air-conditioned place.

Have the person drink water if fully conscious.

Place them in a cool shower or use cold compresses.

Tips to Help People Avoid Heat-Related Problems

Stay in an air-conditioned space during the hottest hours of the day.

Don’t rely on electric fans alone when temperatures exceed 90 degrees.

Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol and sugary drinks.

Never leave a child, elderly person, or pet unattended in a car — even briefly.

Limit outdoor activity during the hottest part of the day.

Wear sunscreen and a wide-brim hat if you must be in the sun.

Avoid using the oven to keep indoor temps lower.

Tips to Keep Your pets cool in hot weather

Keep your pets indoors if it

is cooler inside.

Exercise pets in early morning hours or early evening only.

Keep your pets’ water supply in a tip-proof container, always topped off, and be sure it stays cool (pets will not drink water that is too hot).

Consider a misting system to keep the outdoor areas cooler.

Be sure your pet has shade available ALL DAY, if they are outside. Remember, the sun’s position changes during the day.

Avoid car trips; vehicles heat up dangerously fast. On an 85-degree day, a car can reach 102 degrees in 10 minutes and soar upward even with the windows down an inch or two.

Check pavement temperatures; if it is too hot for your bare feet, it’s too hot for paws.

Offer a shallow wading pool or misting area.

Watch for signs of heat stress: heavy panting, drooling, vomiting, lethargy, or stumbling. Seek veterinary help immediately if you notice these.

Downtown, City & County

Stay cool, check on vulnerable neighbors and keep pets safe!

Our high temperatures can also affect people in the South Bay, especially those living near the Tijuana River Valley, by increasing the hydrogen sulfide emissions in the valley often recognized by a strong rotten egg odor.

People can reduce the impacts by limiting outdoor activities when the odors are present, keeping windows and doors closed, and increasing air circulation with fans or air conditioning on recirculation and to consider using air purifiers with HEPA filters, activated charcoal, or potassium permanganate. People sensitive to air pollution should keep rescue medications ready and seek medical help if symptoms worsen.

People can get more information at the County’s Tijuana River Valley Environmental Dashboard.

For additional information about heat, go to the Health and Human Services “Extreme Heat” webpage.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 24, 2026