

Mutual Aid for Public Works Too?

Santa Barbara County, California was established in February 1850. The County can be subdivided into three large regions, including North County, South County and the Santa Ynez Valley covering 2,774 square miles. The County is comprised of eight incorporated cities, 14 unincorporated communities and the Air Force Base. Santa Barbara is renowned for tourism, wineries, universities, entertainment, and museums... a location such as this would never have disasters right?



one of 58 counties in February 18, 1850. The three large regions, County and the Santa square miles. The incorporated cities, 14 including Vandenberg County is world polo, surfing, boating, fishing, golf, art, as this would never

Wrong! The past ten years (1998 to 2008), the County has had four State declared disasters costing Federally and three \$35 million dollars in reimbursements to the infrastructure for Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation projects. With financially hard times on all local, state and federally operated governments it is imperative to squeeze every nickel to go as far as possible.



With "cost savings" in mind along with a strong desire to provide the highest "customer satisfaction", Public Works Director, Scott McGolpin challenges his staff to be innovative, accountable, quick-acting, goal orientated, customer focused and efficient public servants to the communities we serve. As a result of the California Fire Storms experienced in 2007 the Director asked "isn't there a mutual aid program for Public Works too..."? The research started, and we discovered there was a mutual aid program that was for Public Works with the same eligibility as the Fire and Sheriff's mutual aid plan.

In California 17 Counties and 142 cities are legally able to support mutual aid to each other which is made possible by the "Public Works Mutual Aid Agreement" (PWMAA). In California by 1988 there were 50 federally declared disasters and the mutual aid program for Public Works was first launched in Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino Counties. Santa Barbara County became the first county in the State in getting all eight incorporated Cities signed-up under the PWMAA program.

California has a Master Mutual Aid Agreement that provides mutual aid for all Counties with or without any specific agreements; however, the mutual aid assistance is voluntary. Most agencies are not going to commit their resources without some type of reimbursement clause especially in today's tanking economy. Any disaster recovery individual knows straight time isn't reimbursable under emergency measures for debris or emergencies measures unless the work is done via contract.



Recognized as a binding agreement the PWMAA provides the same reimbursement principals as would a Fire or Police mutual aid agreement and works just like a normal contract.

When it comes right down to it, Public Work facilities generally accounts for over 1/2 to 2/3s, or more, of the disaster recovery monies depending on the type of disasters. In Santa Barbara County, Transportation and Flood Control facilities are nearly equal with each other for funding and project size, followed by Parks, Fire, Sheriff, and General Services.

To start the Public Works Mutual Aid Agreement process within California, you need to (1) if a county, get your Board of Supervisors to adopt the already written agreement as this agreement is in form today by a County Resolution. (2) If a City, simply adopt what the County has in place by the existing PWMAA by a vote of the City Council. (3) If outside of California, adopt an agreement that is legally binding in your state per your State and County regulations. For assistance, you may access our templates by going to www.pwmaa.org or <http://www.countyofsb.org/pwd/Administration/PWMAA.htm>.



Some guidelines that are critical to enact the PWMAA, (1) City/County must declare a local emergency in your area (2) If the County has declared a local emergency, then cities do not have to declare, but declaring would be helpful (3) The PWMAA must be in effect prior to the emergency or disaster (4) You must have recognized “coordinators” available for contact by other jurisdictions (5) If outside of California, get the PWMAA set up with your State Office of Emergency Services who will introduce this service to the FEMA Region (6) Have copies of the agreement ready for FEMA’s review when FEMA arrives for the Preliminary Damage Assessment. Be sure to advise them upfront that you utilized your PWMAA plan, and (7) Be sure to always record and maintain the records of the Who/s, What, Where, When, and Way to be fully reimbursed for the “How Much”.

Scott McGolpin, Public Works Director in Santa Barbara County says, “It is incumbent upon all of us to prepare for potential major disasters within Santa Barbara County that cuts off access to communities beyond our borders. In such a disaster we need to insure that we have in place the administrative tools available to share local agency resources for the protection of the public we serve”;

Picture –
Right to Left McGolpin, Director, with State OES Richard Lawson and Disaster Recovery Manager, Dave Rickard



“This agreement is a significant achievement for the entire county that will benefit all residents, businesses and visitors,” County Executive Officer Michael F. Brown said. “The County’s Office of Emergency Services and the Public Works Department have significantly improved our emergency preparedness efforts by establishing this cooperative agreement with our cities.”

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