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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Barbara County Officials Break Ground for New Emergency Operations Center

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors Chair Janet Wolf, Second District, and County Executive Officer Michael F. Brown joined County emergency officials, community leaders and local philanthropists to “turn the dirt” in a special groundbreaking ceremony today, February 12, heralding the beginning of construction for the County’s new Emergency Operations Center.

“This is an important day for the County’s plans to help protect and serve the public during major emergencies and disasters,” Chair Wolf said. “We’ve needed a permanent, modern home where emergency managers can operate to ensure that the appropriate resources and emergency public information are allocated and delivered when they are needed the most.”

The \$7.4 million, 11,000-square-foot project is a unique collaboration between County government and local philanthropic organizations that are funding the project together, saving the County more than \$1.6 million in costs that can now be devoted to other much-needed County programs and services. The local “Aware and Prepare” coalition is providing about \$2 million to the project while the County is funding the \$5.4 million balance. County funding was set aside during the past decade.

“Aware and Prepare” is a joint effort by the Orfalea Foundations, the Wood-Claeyssens Foundation, the James S. Bower Foundation and the Santa Barbara Foundation whose mission is to help strengthen Santa Barbara County to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency or disaster. “Aware and Prepare” works directly with the Office of Emergency Services within the Santa Barbara County Executive Office.

Local general contractor Melchiori Construction has been selected to build the project. The new building will act as the 24/7 nerve center for emergency managers, government leaders and other key officials where they can manage and monitor the resources, government policy issues and emergency public information needed in response to large-scale emergencies, disasters or multiple public safety incidents that might occur anywhere throughout the county.

The structure also provides a permanent home for the Office of Emergency Services and will be maintained in a state of readiness so that the County’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) can be activated when needed in support of the emergencies within the County Operational Area, including large-scale incidents in the county’s seven cities. Currently, the County does not have a permanently dedicated EOC facility and, when needed, it takes the County several hours to set up its EOC operations.

The new EOC will be built off Cathedral Oaks Road near other County facilities, including the County Fire Department Headquarters. The project is scheduled to be completed in early 2011.

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County of Santa Barbara
Emergency Operations Center
Groundbreaking Ceremony Program
February 12, 2010
10:00 am

Greetings & Introductions

Michael Harris, Emergency Operations Chief

Special Presentation / Recognitions

Supervisor Janet Wolf, Chair of the Board

Paul Orfalea, Orfalea Foundations

Mark Melchiori, Melchiori Construction

Hillary Blackerby, Office of Assemblymember Pedro Nava

Groundbreaking

Second District Supervisor Janet Wolf, Chair

County Executive Officer Michael F. Brown,

Paul Orfalea, Mark Melchiori & Michael Harris