VENTURA COUNTY OPERATIONAL AREA
EMERGENCY PLANNING COUNCIL (EPC)

MEDIA RELEASE

Nature of Event: EPC Coordinates Local Preparedness, Response and Recovery Efforts

Date & Time: March 21, 2011 at 8:00 AM

Unit Responsible: Ventura County Sheriff’s Office of Emergency Services

Narrative:

When disaster strikes, time is of the essence. As a result, the best method of handling a disaster is not to react to it, but to prepare for it before it occurs. That is the purpose of the Ventura County Emergency Planning Council (EPC). Made up of representatives from city, county and local government agencies, along with non-profit and other organizations, the EPC is responsible for coordinating and developing emergency management plans for the county.

The recent catastrophic events in Japan are a clear demonstration of the need for this kind of advance planning. Not only does the county need to be prepared for a disaster that occurs here, but also for one that strikes elsewhere and may have an impact on the county.

While Ventura County escaped any significant damage from Japan’s earthquake or the tsunami it generated, advance planning by the EPC ensured there were systems in place should the county be affected. Even now, agency members of the EPC are monitoring radiation levels to ensure the county is prepared in the unlikely event that radiation released in Japan reaches dangerous levels here.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) operates three radiation monitors in Southern California for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, including one at Fire Station 21 in Ojai. The SCAQMD is posting daily radiation monitoring updates on their website: http://www.aqmd.gov.

The Ventura County Health Care Agency is also closely watching radiation levels to determine if any protective actions are necessary. Medical Director Robert M. Levin, M.D., has prepared a radiation fact sheet for Ventura County residents but cautions there is no risk expected for the county.
“We urge our county’s residents not to take potassium iodide as a precautionary measure,” he said. “Taken inappropriately, it can have serious side effects. If we become aware of a radiation threat to our county’s residents, we will recommend protective actions.”

In addition, local law enforcement and fire agencies, along with city, school and county government organizations have also developed contingency plans in case the need should arise. But, as a group, the EPC reminds residents that preparation is the most effective means of dealing with a disaster.

“Preparation begins with you,” said EPC chairwoman Linda Parks. “If everyone does their part to plan for a disaster, the county will be ready if it occurs. The EPC is here to help all our residents to achieve that goal.”

Questions regarding the EPC may be referred to Laura Hernandez, Assistant Director of Emergency Services, at 805-654-2552.

For more information on disaster preparedness, please visit the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s website at www.ready.gov or the County of Ventura Disaster Information page at www.countyofventura.org/disasterinformation.

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Approved By: Ventura County Emergency Planning Council

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