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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**UPDATE ON MAJOR MUDSLIDES AND FLOODING**

A local emergency was declared on July 12<sup>th</sup> as flooding and mudslides devastated areas of Inyo County. A property damage assessment is expected to begin tomorrow and completion will be determined by the accessibility to the flood-zone areas. Officials involved are indicating that storm impacts have been compounded by mud and debris flows emanating from areas affected by last years Inyo Complex Wild Fire. "It is estimated that 25 structures suffered major damage, not to mention numerous outbuildings," stated Inyo County Sheriff, Bill Lutze. "South Oak Creek is considered to be a total loss," Lutze concluded.

California Highway Patrol, California Department of Transportation, Inyo County Road Department and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power are working tirelessly to reopen highway 395 to full capacity. Currently traffic is being escorted north of Independence through the effected flood-zone on highway 395. "There is still a significant amount of debris on the road," said CHP Sergeant, Rich Underwood. For current road conditions please call 1-800-427-ROAD or 511 on your cellular phone.

Due to current weather conditions, the Forest Service will not be issuing wilderness permits from Onion Valley through Lone Pine. For any questions regarding wilderness permits please contact (760) 873-2483.

Evacuations are still in effect in the following areas and security will be enforced:

- Oak Creek / West Fort Independence
  - Fort Independence Camp Ground
  - East Fort Independence flood-zone (voluntary)
  - Grays Meadows area (voluntary)
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Office of the  
**SHERIFF**  
INYO COUNTY, CA



*WILLIAM R. LUTZE*  
*Sheriff*

*JOHN N. EROPKIN*  
*Undersheriff*

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- Whitney Portal Campground (voluntary)

According to the National Weather Service, flash flood warnings are in effect until late this evening. "Tecopa, Shoshone, Death Valley and Saline Valley are all experiencing major rainfall. It is essential that citizens take an active role in their safety, no one should be entering flood-zones," said Inyo County Sheriff, Bill Lutze.

FEMA offers the following tips to stay safe during and after flooding:

During a flood:

- If flooding directly effects you, please remember to go to higher ground – get out of areas subject to flooding; this includes dips, low spots, canyons, and washes.
- Avoid areas already flooded, especially if the water is flowing fast. Do not attempt to cross flowing streams.
- Roadbeds may be washed out. NEVER drive through flooded roadways. If your vehicle is suddenly caught in rising water, leave it immediately and seek higher ground.

After the Storm:

- Do not turn electricity back on in your home if you detect gas or if the electrical system has been flooded.
- Clean and disinfect everything that was touched by floodwaters or mudflows and throw out any such foodstuffs.
- Follow directions from local officials regarding the safety of drinking water.

The evacuation center in Independence has been suspended and will be reopened as needed.

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