



"A Professional Service Agency"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPDATE ON MAJOR MUDSLIDES AND FLOODING
Mud and Debris Flows Destroy Areas of Independence

A local emergency was declared as mud and debris flows destroyed areas of Independence on Saturday July 12th. "Areas affected by the Inyo Complex Wild Fire last summer made this region particularly vulnerable," said Inyo County Administrator, Kevin Carunchio.

The flood-zone area encompasses Federal, State, Tribal and locally owned land. "At least 25 structures suffered major damage, not to mention numerous outbuildings," stated Inyo County Sheriff, Bill Lutze. "The Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery has suffered significant damage, and South Oak Creek including several residences is considered to be a total loss," concluded Lutze.

A community meeting has been scheduled for 5:00 p.m. tomorrow evening (July 15th) at the Independence Legion Hall. Representatives from Salvation Army, American Red Cross, State OES as well as agency officials involved in the massive multiagency flood response will be available to field questions and provide information.

In a briefing this morning CHP and Cal Trans stressed that "safety is their number one concern; there are a lot of heavy equipment operators removing debris. Anyone wanting access to Fish Hatchery Road is asked to please check in and wait for an escort," said Caltrans spokeswoman Trish Sanders.

Traffic is still currently being escorted through the effected areas on highway 395 north of Independence. 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. For current road conditions please call 1-800-427-ROAD or 511 on your cellular phone.

The Forest Service has resumed issuing wilderness permits to the Mt. Whitney area, Cottonwood pass area, and Onion Valley. Baxter Pass is closed. For any questions regarding wilderness permits please contact (760) 873-2483.

Office of the
SHERIFF
INYO COUNTY, CA



WILLIAM R. LUTZE
Sheriff

JOHN N. EROPKIN
Undersheriff

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

- Oak Creek / West Fort Independence
- Fort Independence Camp Ground

A flood relief fund has been set up by the Independence Civic Club to help people whose homes have been destroyed or damaged by the flooding. Donations can be sent to the Independence Civic Club, Attn: Flood Relief Fund, P.O. Box 482, Independence, CA 93526.

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.

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