



RON ROBERTS
SUPERVISOR, FOURTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: October 12, 2010

01

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: ENHANCING THE COUNTY'S EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION CAPABILITIES (DISTRICTS: ALL)

SUMMARY:

Overview

Prior to the 2003 Firestorm, the County was devoid of a mass notification system to personally notify the region's residents of approaching danger. Since that time, however, this Board of Supervisors has significantly enhanced the region's emergency notification capabilities.

In 2005, at the direction of Supervisor Cox and the Sheriff, this Board of Supervisors approved the implementation of a Reverse 9-1-1 system which provides a very practical and reliable server-based method of contacting residents during an emergency. In 2007, at the direction of Supervisor Cox and me, our Board voted to take advantage of next generation technology and procure a robust Internet-based mass notification system, now known as AlertSanDiego. This system can notify up to 750,000 residents in an hour. Both systems proved valuable during the Firestorm of 2007. During the wildfire, 377,000 Reverse 9-1-1 calls were made and 172,000 AlertSanDiego messages were delivered, aiding in the evacuation of thousands of residents in what eventually culminated in the largest evacuation in California's history.

These systems, coupled with the County's strong connection with media outlets, use of social media and state of the art emergency website, have resulted in the County of San Diego becoming a national leader in emergency public communication. Today's action will augment these systems by procuring an emergency alert system specifically designed for residents with sensory disabilities. Now, at my direction, today's action will authorize the County to procure services from DeafLink to provide an emergency alert system for residents who are deaf, blind or hard of hearing.

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Recommendation(s)

SUPERVISOR ROBERTS

In accordance with Section 401 et seq, of the County Administrative Code authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to award a contract for an emergency alert system specifically designed for residents with sensory disabilities who are deaf, blind, hard of hearing, or deaf/blind to DeafLink for a term of one year, with three option year(s) and up to an additional six months if needed, and to amend the contract as needed to reflect changes to services and funding, subject to approval of the Director, Office of Emergency Services. |

Fiscal Impact

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2010-12 Adopted Operational Plan. If approved, this request will result in Fiscal Year 2010-11 costs and revenue of \$78,000. The funding source is the federal Department of Homeland Security, through the Cal EMA, Fiscal Year 2010 Homeland Security Grant Program. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

Business Impact Statement

N/A

Advisory Board Statement

N/A

BACKGROUND:

During a disaster or major emergency, it is critical that the County be able to communicate quickly and effectively with the public, and provide information that will allow members of the public to take the steps necessary to protect themselves and their families. Disaster preparedness has always been a major priority of this Board, and as a result, this County has some of the most sophisticated public communication systems and processes in the nation.

Our current communication systems and methods attempt to ensure maximum communication with the segment of our population that has sensory disabilities, or has a primary language other than English. For example, our AlertSanDiego system is TTY compatible, we utilize sign-language interpreters at our emergency press conferences, and both our ReadySanDiego website and emergency publications are multi-lingual. However, more can be done to ensure that everyone in our community receives our critical messages during an emergency.

In San Diego County, there are an estimated 5,000 residents that are Deaf and use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language. Another 80,000 county residents are "late deafened" or hard-of-hearing. Today's recommended action will authorize the County to contract with DeafLink, a private company that provides an array of services that will dramatically improve the County's ability to communicate with the sensory disabled community both prior to and during a disaster.

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The translation of any of our emergency public messages within minutes into ASL, Spanish, audio for the blind and text for Braille devices are of paramount importance. DeafLink provides a 24/7 service where translations are immediately provided to local media, posted to our website and provided to our sensory disabled residents that had pre-signed up to receive emergency messages. Thus, during the critical times of an emergency, our emergency messages are available in ASL, Spanish, Audio and Braille, for the media to broadcast, as well as to be sent directly to residents and agencies such as the Deaf Community Services and the Braille Institute. A key aspect of this is that local TV will be able to display a small box at the bottom of their broadcast with an ASL video translating the emergency message.

This Board action also will authorize several other key services to improve our ability to communicate with the sensory disabled community. As part of the contract, DeafLink will translate the key preparedness information on our ReadySanDiego website into ASL and audio/Braille for the blind. Additionally, this contract will authorize support from DeafLink for any emergency shelters that may be established where services for the deaf, blind or hard of hearing are needed. The contract also provides for DeafLink to hold forums and meetings in our community to encourage community members to register, at no cost, for this service, and to promote disaster preparedness within these communities. Once registered for the system, residents will be able to indicate the type of format they want their alerts delivered in. Residents can receive alerts in ASL video, English or Spanish voice, and English or Spanish text through cell phones, computers, video capable PDAs and Braille devices. Finally, the contract will be structured so that this is a regional resource, and all 18 cities in the County can utilize these services as needed.

DeafLink is the only known company that provides the full extent and this type of service in the nation. They currently provide this service to the entire state of Texas. Providing a notification system specifically designed for the deaf, blind and hard of hearing will enhance the ability of all residents to receive emergency notifications and take appropriate protective actions before, during and after an emergency. This system will serve as an effective public communication platform, providing a key ingredient to a successful emergency response.

I urge your support.

Respectfully submitted,

RON ROBERTS
Supervisor, Fourth District

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: Yes No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED
 Yes No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:
N/A

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:
N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:
N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:
N/A

ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):
N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Ron Roberts, Supervisor, Fourth District

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): N/A

CONTACT PERSON(S):

Jason Farran

Name
619 531-5544

Mail Station
Jason.farran@sdcountry.ca.gov

E-mail