



MEDIA RELEASE

Nature of Incident:

Residents of Matilija Canyon Urged to Leave their Homes

Location:

Ventura County, California

Date & Time:

01/15/23 @ 11:00AM.

Unit(s) Responsible:

Ventura County Sheriff Emergency Services, Ventura County Sheriff Aviation Unit, Ventura County Public Works

Narrative:

The January storms have resulted in widespread damage and debris across Ventura County, especially in the Community of Matilija. Situated just 3 miles North of Ojai in the Los Padres National Forest, Matilija is located in a remote wooded canyon with just one way in and out. On January 9th, the community received over 17" of high-intensity rainfall resulting in significant damage and debris throughout the area. Towering piles of rock and mud reach over 40-feet tall in some locations, blocking access to roadways and leaving residents isolated to the canyon.

Since the start of the storm, Ventura County Public Works has been working to clear debris from the county roadways however, ongoing rain has led to unsafe conditions slowing cleanup efforts. Public Works estimates it may take up to three weeks to clear a single-lane access road into the community and up to six months to complete required repairs. Extra resources from Ventura County Public Works and private contractors have been secured to assist with cleanup and repair efforts.

Due to the limited ingress and egress to the area, the Ventura County Sheriff Aviation Unit and Tactical Response Team has deployed on two separate occasions to check on residents in Matilija and offer assistance evacuating. To date, over ten helicopter flights have been conducted to the community and over 70 residents have been transported by air. Despite Sheriff's Office efforts, some residents indicated they were inclined to stay in lieu of evacuating.

Upon being evacuated, residents are met by personnel from Sheriff Emergency Services and the Ventura County Human Services Agency who assist in determining what temporary assistance is needed. Residents are offered free lodging, meals, and transportation to local motels if requested. In many cases, residents have declined assistance and opted to stay with nearby family and friends. Five families remained housed in a motel as a result of the incident. The Sheriff's Aviation Unit has and continues to respond to requests from residents for evacuation assistance from the community.



The Ventura County Sheriff's Office and the County of Ventura recognize the hardship and inconvenience evacuations impose upon residents however, circumstances have left no other reasonable options. Repeated periods of foul weather and unsafe conditions have made remaining in the community unsafe. Residents who remain in the area are urged to evacuate from the area until roadways are once again passable.

If assistance is needed with evacuations, please call the Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services at (805) 947-8210.

Prepared by: Patrick Maynard, Director, Sheriff Emergency Services

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