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Sept. 29, 2009

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County of Santa Clara and Local Cities Launch AlertSCC, New Countywide Emergency Notification System

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF.— Where will you be when a disaster strikes? Whether Santa Clara County residents are at home, at work, their children's softball game or sitting in traffic on Highway 101, the new regional emergency notification system AlertSCC will enable residents to receive timely and lifesaving information no matter their location. Today, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors, joined by local city officials, announced the launch of AlertSCC, and encouraged residents to go to www.AlertSCC.com to register their cell phones and email addresses.

"This is a monumental day for the 1.8 million residents of Santa Clara County as we launch our first regional emergency notification system," said Supervisor Liz Kniss, President of the County of Santa Clara Board of

Supervisors and Chair of the Board's Disaster Council. "This is a call to action. Beginning today, residents should go to the AlertSCC web site to sign up to receive emergency information related to disasters such as earthquakes, floods, or wildfires."

The County of Santa Clara spearheaded the purchase, implementation and roll out of AlertSCC to local jurisdictions including the cities of San José, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Saratoga, Cupertino, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Milpitas, Gilroy, Campbell, Los Altos, and the Town of Los Gatos, Monte Sereno and Los Altos Hills.

"The County has led a unified and collaborative effort to ensure that everyone in Santa Clara County will benefit from AlertSCC," said Supervisor Ken Yeager, who brought the alert system initiative to the Board of Supervisors in 2007. "The range and flexibility of communication options to be offered will keep our residents safe and well-informed."

AlertSCC is an automated system with the capacity to send thousands of text and voice messages within minutes to home and business land line phones using 411 and 911 databases. While the system uses land lines from the databases, to reach cell phones, PDA's, laptops, desktop computers, and devices for the hearing impaired, anyone who lives or works in the county must register their cell phone numbers or email address at www.AlertSCC.com.

The system can be used for a variety of emergency and community service notifications such as fires, crime incidents, hazmat incidents,

infectious disease information, contaminated food warnings, road/school closures, and contacting disaster service workers.

“An emergency alert system may make all the difference in whether or not residents survive a disaster,” said Supervisor Dave Cortese, Vice Chair of the Board’s Disaster Council. “In a natural disasters or hazmat incidents, time is of the essence, and this tool will allow us to give our residents urgent warnings.”

While no one knows exactly when or where a disaster such as an earthquake or flood will strike, it’s more than likely to cross city boundaries and encompass several cities in a wide geographic area. For example, if residents need to be notified of an evacuation, the public notification system enables the county or local city to contact its residents in a targeted or countywide geographic area through multiple means of communication. The system provides the ability to notify residents anytime or prescheduled in targeted or regional areas and can be activated by web, phone or satellite phone. Once a notification is sent, the system tracks results and reports on message delivery including which messages had a live delivery, answering machine, bad phone number, busy signal, hang up, fax/modem or undeliverable. The system has the means to resend the undelivered messages.

“Alerting residents of a disaster and informing them of appropriate actions is an important, and constantly evolving, government task,” said San José Mayor Chuck Reed. “I encourage all residents to register. Stay informed. Stay alive.”

“AlertSCC is the fastest and easiest way to become better prepared in the event of an emergency, from natural disasters, to a terrorist attacks, to violent crimes,” said Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive. “Registering for AlertSCC may be as crucial to surviving a disaster as making a family emergency plan and assembling a home disaster supplies kit, and it only takes a few minutes.”

The City of Morgan Hill was the first city to send a public safety message using the regional AlertSCC system. In late March, there were several attacks on women in Morgan Hill. The city and County issued a public safety alert to residents of Morgan Hill and the unincorporated areas of South Santa Clara County through the notification system, alerting residents to the incidents and advising them to take extra precautions in shopping center parking lots.

“AlertSCC proved to be an essential communications tool that enabled us to notify residents about a local public safety issue, quickly and effectively,” said Ed Tewes, Morgan Hill City Manager.

Through the AlertSCC web site, all residents in Santa Clara County can sign up to receive the alerts. To register, go to the web site, select the city you live and/or work in, and provide cell phone and email address information to receive alerts.

"The City of Mountain View is delighted to be a partner in this regional effort," said Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga, City of Mountain View. "It is critical

that we strengthen our efforts to improve public preparedness and response and to do so in a collaborative manner."

AlertSCC will be used to supplement the region's existing emergency communication methods, augmenting public safety and first responder services. It will not take the place of the 911 and other communication and notification systems (such as radio systems) that first responders currently use.

For more information or to register to receive AlertSCC messages, go to www.AlertSCC.com.

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