



County Disaster Risk Identification and Recent Incidents

County of San Mateo resides within the Coastal Region of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) administrative response regions. The 2021 Multijurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan for the County of San Mateo identifies several hazards including, but not limited to, landslides, severe weather, tsunamis, wildfires, earthquake, flood, drought, dam failure, and hazardous material release. Historical disasters for the county recorded since 1958 are most consistently flooding, landslides, mud flows, and severe winter storms. The county did experience the significant Loma Prieta Earthquake in 1989 with a magnitude of 6.9 on the Richter scale.

Emergency Plans

- County of San Mateo Emergency Operations Plan (2015)
- Peninsula Humane Society Disaster Plan (2019)
- County does not have an animal annex developed

County Animal Services and Capabilities

The Peninsula Humane Society (PHS) and the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) serves as the animal control vendor for the county, operating under the Department of Health. There are approximately 18 Animal Humane Officers (AHOs) that could provide support in field response. None of the AHOs have received fireline training. PHS has one facility in Burlingame that focuses on adoptions/wildlife care/fundraising and operates the contracted animal control function at the County Animal Care and Control shelter in San Mateo. PHS has a large number of volunteers for day-to-day operations (approximately 1000) and a small subset of those volunteers (about 25) are trained for disaster response.

Response Organizations and Capabilities

PHS disaster response volunteers are trained quarterly and participate in a county-facilitated training once a year. PHS can take in convergent volunteers if needed during a response utilizing just-in-time training, but typically there are enough volunteers that convergent volunteers are not needed. Currently, none of the PHS volunteers are registered Disaster Service Workers (DSWs) but are covered under the liability of PHS when volunteering.

PHS also provides volunteers for owner support teams, providing food, water, and other animal supplies to owners so they can care for their own animals, decreasing the need for additional shelter support.

The San Mateo Large Animal Evacuation Group (LAEG) is a key partner in response operations, providing both evacuation and sheltering support for large/farm animals. LAEG has a roster of over 45 members with approximately 30 that are currently active and able to deploy. During the CZU Lightning Complex Fire LAEG gained about 200 volunteers and many of them remain in the community as reserve volunteers. LAEG is activated by the Department of Health who serves as the Animal Branch Director during an EOC activation. Once activated LAEG will establish staging areas for their teams to report to and determine where evacuated animals will be taken. Once evacuation points/shelter locations have been determined, LAEG will deploy responders to evacuate animals. As the animals are evacuated, each one will be assessed by a veterinarian upon arriving to the shelter. LAEG has memorandums of understanding (MOUs) established with 4 veterinarians who will rotate to the various staging areas to assess animals as needed.

Outside of responding to disasters, LAEG provides community education materials to livestock and equine owners on how to prepare for disasters and recommendations to plan for evacuation with their animals.

AT-A-GLANCE

PHS:

- 9 Animal Humane Officers per 100K animals in the county
- 2 facility locations
- Large number of trained volunteers
- Supplies for pop-up shelters

LAEG:

- Evacuation and sheltering support of large animals
- Operate through staging areas and veterinary exams

Level of Veterinary Assistance Needed:



Equipment and Supply Caches

- County Animal Services animal care cache, housed at the County Animal Shelter
- 4 trailers (1 solely for dog kennels), each with shelter supplies for approximately 50-100 dogs and includes generators – each trailer is pre-staged in different areas around the county
- LAEG has two mobile trailers that contain needed materials for evacuations and are housed currently on the San Mateo coast

Current Operational Area Coordination Efforts

If needed, the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) would activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Animal Branch. A representative from the Department of Health would serve as the Animal Branch Director within the Operations Section of the EOC. The county also has established the Coastside Emergency Action Program which is a Volunteer Organization Active in Disasters (VOAD) that provides a forum to discuss disaster preparedness efforts in the county. DEM is in the process of developing a tabletop exercise for November of 2023.

LAEG is currently exploring the idea to cross train their volunteers with the Santa Cruz Equine Evacuation Team. There is also a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in the county that has completed animal response training, coordinating their efforts with PHS. With the presence of both PHS and LAEG in the county, mutual aid assistance for animal care has historically not been needed. The only recent request that has been made was use of the Cow Palace for animal sheltering which was successfully managed by the DEM.

Shelter Facilities and Fairgrounds

Although no formal agreements are in place, PHS attempts to set up animal shelters near the American Red Cross (ARC) shelters. PHS does have capacity for large animal sheltering if needed and has the resources to set up field shelters. The Cow Palace has been used in the past for animal sheltering; and because this is a state-owned facility, veterinary exams were required on all animals that were sheltered at that location. In addition, LAEG has 18 MOUs with various facilities for both staging and sheltering of animals. The county does not currently participate in the Ag Pass program but is considering implementing it in the future.

Veterinary Capabilities

There are approximately 32 animal hospital/clinics in the County of San Mateo. PHS has a strong veterinary response capacity with access to care 24/7. There are currently 4.5 part time veterinarians and 1 Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT), as well as a few additional contract veterinarians to support them as needed. PHS also has a mobile spay and neuter program that could be utilized as a field response unit if needed for veterinary care. PHS has surveyed the local veterinarians to determine who may be able to assist during a disaster and although the response has been minimal, they have been able to identify a few clinics that could help. However, continuing to maintain consistent veterinary support has become more challenging over the years. Most of the veterinary needs have been noted 2-3 weeks into the event as symptoms develop from smoke inhalation, stress, or other factors.

Areas of Potential Improvement

Members of San Mateo County identified the following needs:

- Development of a county animal annex
- Establishing coordinated protocols for ARC co-located or co-habitated shelters
- Identification of large animal sheltering locations and resources
- Large animal veterinarians that have a strong knowledge of ruminants

CVET Support and Integration

San Mateo County has a robust animal response structure with both PHS and LAEG to provide for small and large animals. In addition, PHS has access to not only a large number of volunteers, but 24/7 veterinary care. However, local veterinary support has decreased over time, and CVET would be able to provide veterinary support in a larger event where current resources are exhausted due to the size or duration of the event. In addition, CVET also recommends the development of a county animal annex/response plan to document the current animal response operations and allow for a basis to train from and make continuous improvements. San Mateo may also be a viable mutual aid resource to other neighboring counties for animal response support, so regional tabletop exercises are also recommended.

