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P R E S S R E L E A S E

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**ANNOUNCING EVACUATION WARNING IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FOR
SHERPA BURN AREA
*Storm Watch Update***

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – Following winter weather warnings from the National Weather Service for Santa Barbara County, an evacuation warning has been issued from the Santa Barbara County Sheriff for areas burned in the Sherpa Fire (June 2016) including El Capitan Canyon, El Capitan Ranch, El Capitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, Refugio Canyon, Canada Venadito Canyon, del Coral, and Las Flores Canyon (see enclosed map). The warning is in place for today, February 17 beginning at 8 a.m.

An evacuation warning means there is a strong likelihood that there will be a risk to life and property, and residents in the warning area should take this time to prepare to leave quickly if given a mandatory evacuation order. Time should be taken to gather family members, pets, valuables, and important paperwork/documents. An individual or family should be ready to leave at a moment's notice. However, if anyone feels threatened, do not wait for an evacuation order – leave immediately.

In addition, the National Weather Service has issued a Flash Flood Watch for the entire County of Santa Barbara. People should be prepared for the issuance of a Flash Flood Warning in their area that will require taking action to protect themselves.

El Capitan and Refugio state parks are currently closed. All roads in the area of the evacuation warning are closed to general traffic. Only emergency vehicles will be allowed through.

The public is encouraged to avoid going out in the storm and to stay off the roads. As a precaution, do not walk through flood waters. It only takes six inches of moving water to knock you off your feet. If you are trapped by moving water, move to the highest possible point and call 911 for help.

Do not drive into flooded roadways or around a barricade. Water may be deeper than it appears and can hide many hazards, such as sharp objects, washed out road surfaces, electrical wires, chemicals, etc. A vehicle caught in swiftly moving water can be swept away in a matter of seconds. Twelve inches of water can float a car or small SUV and 18 inches of water can carry away large vehicles.

For updated information, visit www.countyofsb.org. Residents and visitors are strongly encouraged to sign up for “Aware and Prepare” alerts at www.awareandprepare.org. The Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center has been activated as well as the Joint Information Center to provide county residents and visitors with updated information regarding flash flooding and debris flow hazards.

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