SHERPA FIRE UPDATE

(Santa Barbara, CA) – A press conference to provide an update on the Sherpa Fire was held at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 16, 2016 at Dos Pueblos High School.

Representatives of Santa Barbara County Fire Department, US Forest Service, California Highway Patrol, Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Department, California State Parks, CAL FIRE and Santa Barbara County Public Health/Animal Services were present.

Officials reiterated that safety is the number one priority in fighting the fire. “This is a significant and difficult incident,” stated Santa Barbara County Fire Chief Eric Petersen. Wind is a major concern, as sundowners are expected later today. In addition, fuel in the area is old and has not burned since 1955. Protection of critical facilities is also a high priority. These critical facilities include utilities, railways, highways, pipelines, and oil/gas facilities.

FACTS

- On Wednesday, June 15, 2016, a fire started off of Refugio Road at approximately 3:15 p.m.
- The Emergency Operations Center was activated at 10:37 p.m.
- As of midday on Thursday, the wind-driven fire had consumed approximately 1,200 acres and continued burning in steep and rugged terrain.
- It is presently at 0% containment.
- The fire is currently burning ¼ mile from Highway 101 near the Refugio Campground.
- Resources from throughout California are on the firelines fighting the Sherpa Fire. The US Forest Service, CAL FIRE, and Santa Barbara County are in Unified Command. Local fire engines and personnel from Santa Maria, Lompoc, Santa Barbara City, Montecito, and Carpinteria/Summerland fire departments are fighting the fire as well as units from surrounding counties.

“Conditions and terrain are dangerous, making it difficult for crews to reach,” Chief Petersen noted. “We will rely heavily on air support as well as hand crews,” he added.

ROAD CLOSURES
Highway 101 is currently open in both directions. However, this is subject to change on little or no notice, dependent upon fire conditions. Rail service has resumed.

**EVACUATION: MANDATORY AND WARNINGS**
The following areas are under currently under mandatory evacuation orders, including: Refugio Canyon, Las Flores, Venadito, El Capitan Campground, El Capitan Canyon, El Capitan Ranch, Ocean Mesa at El Capitan and Refugio Campground/Dos Pueblos between El Capitan Canyon and Farren Road is currently under warning. If you feel threatened, do not wait for an evacuation order – leave immediately.

**SHELTERS**
A shelter for people has been established at the Wake Center, located at 300 N. Turnpike Road in Santa Barbara. 41 people stayed the night of June 15, 2016. All but three stayed outside of the facility in their own campers on-site. A limited number people are using the facility. Wake Center will remain open until evacuations are lifted.

A shelter for people at Santa Ynez Union High School, located at 2975 E. Hwy 246 in Santa Ynez, is on standby and will reopen if needed.

**ANIMALS**
Anyone in the evacuation area that needs assistance with animals should call (805) 681-4332. Sheltering for large animals has been provided at Earl Warren Showgrounds upon owner’s request. Assistance was provided to Circle Bar B Ranch, and roughly 83 horses were evacuated to Earl Warren Showgrounds. Kennels were provided so small animals could remain with their owners.

**RESIDENTS**
Residents should monitor the status of the fire, and heed any guidance made available on the County of Santa Barbara website at www.countyofsb.org and/or www.awareandprepare.org. Residents may contact the public information center by dialing 211. It is also recommended that residents follow any guidance provided by their employer. In addition, residents should take into consideration that additional travel time may be needed. If you feel threatened, do not wait for an evacuation order – leave immediately.

**MEDIA ONLY**
Joint Information Center 805-696-1188
Hashtag #SherpaFire

County of Santa Barbara, Fire, Sheriff, Office of Emergency Management and Public Health have posted information on their social media including Twitter, Facebook and Nixle.

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