PRESS RELEASE
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
April 23, 2009

The Fire Department and various other agencies will be conducting a major offshore exercise on April 27th, at the Goleta Beach Park, that will be simulating a downed aircraft in the proximity of the Goleta Beach Pier. This location was chosen to allow maximum accessibility by all news media.

The exercise, entitled: Ocean Operations Exercise – 2009; will allow all the major ocean rescue providers such as the County Fire Department, Coast Guard, and other local agencies to work together during a simulated emergency off shore response.

This year, and for the first time, two helicopters will be put into action, providing both Rescue Swimmer deployment and victim and Rescue Swimmer retrievals. Our County Fire helicopter, Copter 308, will be taking part in addition to a Coast Guard helicopter from their base at LAX. The Coast Guard Cutter Black Fin, based here in Santa Barbara, will also be attending and involved in the exercise along with water craft from the County Fire Department and numerous other agencies.

The scenario of a plan crash calls for over fifty “victims”, all of whom are volunteers from the local area, including a large contingent from the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority (UCSB), local County Fire Department Explorers, City College students, and local high school students. They will be the mock victims, and as you will see, there will be a beehive of activity in and around the “crash site” which consists of several inflatable boats lashed together to simulate a downed aircraft.

The exercise will also feature a few “firsts” in the medical arena. Medical care and transportation of the exercise is being coordinated by the County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency. To augment the operations, the EMS Agency
will be deploying its Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) to establish a patient treatment unit in a tent near the beach. The MRC is an all-volunteer disaster medical team that can be called to assist with large scale local disasters. MRC members are licensed physicians, nurses, paramedics, EMTs, social workers and mental health counselors. Additionally, the EMS Agency will be displaying a newly arrived state-provided, “Disaster Medical Services Unit” or “DMSU-150”. This specialized vehicle is equipped to handle up to fifty (50) casualties, augmenting other local resources. Medical professionals interested in finding out more about joining the MRC should go to http://www.sbcphd.org/ems/mrc/default.html or call Jennifer Eskridge at 805-681-4759.

This will be a dynamic and fast paced event with numerous opportunities to view the activities, talk with victims and rescuers’ alike, and see first hand how your local agencies are preparing for a major off shore emergency.

If you have any questions, or would like to be embedded on one of the vessels for a closer look during the exercise, contact Captain Thadius King (Exercise Coordinator) for additional details at either (805) 455-7324 or via e-mail at tad.king@sbcfire.com.

See you on the water!