

**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**  
AWARE & PREPARE

A Community Partnership to Strengthen Emergency & Disaster Readiness

**AWARE & PREPARE**

The Aware & Prepare Initiative is a public-private partnership dedicated to strengthening community disaster resiliency within Santa Barbara County. Aware & Prepare enhances the capabilities and coordination of government agencies and non-profit organizations in mitigating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disasters.

**CHALLENGE**

**Reactive VS. Proactive Giving**

Disaster response giving among private donors to both domestic and international incidents has risen dramatically over the past several decades. In 2012, 234 U.S. foundations made 884 grants totaling \$111 million for disasters. The majority of this funding was for natural disasters (58%) and almost half was directed to response and relief efforts (46%).<sup>[i]</sup> This amount continues to grow as disasters occur more frequently and with greater severity. As a consequence, instead of having sufficient time to make deliberately targeted and informed decisions, philanthropists often find themselves in a reactionary mode.



[i] Foundation Center and Center for Disaster Philanthropy, "Measuring the State of Disaster Philanthropy 2014: Data to Drive Decisions," 2014. Available at: [http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/disasterphilanthropy\\_2014.pdf](http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/disasterphilanthropy_2014.pdf).

[ii] Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury, "Disaster Preparedness: Are We Really Ready?" May 15, 2006.

## APPROACH

### Building a Community Partnership

Advance planning not only increases efficiency and effectiveness in philanthropic giving during disasters, but investing in emergency preparedness has a rate of return of 1:7. The Aware & Prepare Initiative was created as a result of the catastrophic impact of Hurricane Katrina on the southeastern region of the United States in 2005. After witnessing the devastation of communities that were insufficiently prepared to respond and recover from a catastrophic disaster, the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury began an investigation to determine the capabilities of local government to respond to a disaster of a similar magnitude, such as an earthquake. The grand jury determined that Santa Barbara County was ill-equipped to respond to a large-scale emergency or catastrophic disaster in several key planning areas, including emergency public information, the emergency operations center, emergency medical care, and emergency sheltering.<sup>[iii]</sup>

The Orfalea Foundation recognized this as an opportunity for philanthropic investment and retained the global emergency management consulting firm James Lee Witt Associates to further assess needs and identify recommendations for a proactive granting strategy. The Aware & Prepare Initiative was launched in 2008 in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management, its mission being to create a community partnership to enhance capabilities to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters within the Santa Barbara County Operational Area. Seven priority themes were identified for targeted investment:

#### 1. Public Education and Awareness

Strategies and programs to help the general public become better prepared for a disaster, including programs that specifically target vulnerable populations (including the disabled, elderly, and non-English speaking populations) and focus on all-hazards emergencies.

#### 2. Coordination and Communication

Strategies and capabilities to develop strong relationships within the community, specifically between the local government and non-governmental and non-profit organizations.

#### 3. Preparedness: Planning, Training and Exercises

Strategies and capabilities to develop an active and inclusive planning process as well as training exercise programs in the community, including quality control, continuous improvement, and feedback mechanisms.

#### 4. Emergency Public Information

Strategies and capabilities (including information technology and equipment) to warn the public of an impending disaster and to provide emergency instructions on suggested actions.

#### 5. Resources and Personnel

Strategies and capabilities to develop caches of disaster supplies, lists of capabilities and skills of organizations and responders, as well as knowledge of available resources and the capability to move them (people and supplies) to where they are needed.

#### 6. Authority and Management

Facilities (including the Emergency Operations Center) and capabilities for community leadership to provide command, control, and coordination of disaster response activities.

#### 7. Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

Continued development of an active VOAD organization comprising non-governmental agencies in partnership with local government to improve coordination and capabilities in disaster preparedness and response.

## ADAPTATION

### Evolution to a Self-governing Body

Although the mission has remained the same, the Aware & Prepare Initiative has evolved to be a unique and dynamic public/private partnership that prioritizes collaborative strategic planning and decision making. The governance structure has shifted from a foundation-led initiative to an Executive Committee with representatives from multiple sectors and diverse communities. The committee is responsible for general oversight, fiscal management, and final decisions on funding requests. The Aware & Prepare Initiative has also become the recognized and universally-accepted brand for public education and disaster awareness programs throughout Santa Barbara County.



## IMPACT

### 400,000 People are Safer Every Day

The Aware & Prepare Initiative summative program evaluation was conducted in 2011. Over a three-year period, 61% of funding was allocated in support of the public sector and 39% of funding was allocated in support of the nonprofit sector. The single largest investment was a \$2.025 million contribution toward a new state-of-the-art county Emergency Operations Center. The evaluation concluded that Operational Area preparedness levels increased by 43% and organizational preparedness levels increased by 30%. Most importantly, 81% of stakeholders believed that they had the appropriate executive support to continue implementation of their responsibilities. With regards to the initiative itself, 75% of stakeholders felt that the program structure and resources were sufficient to address the gaps in emergency management capabilities.





## CONTINUITY

### A Self-Sustaining Culture of Preparedness

Seven years after its inception, the Aware & Prepare Initiative is sustained by over 40 partner organizations, while the Executive Committee continues to provide leadership and oversight. The initiative is managed by the Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management and is thriving due to committed, passionate community leaders, emergency managers, and volunteers. More information is available at: [www.awareandprepare.org](http://www.awareandprepare.org).

**\$8,100,000**  
INVESTED

**423,000**  
RESIDENTS IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

**\$19**  
PER RESIDENT

**ORFALEA**  
FOUNDATION

#### ORFALEA FOUNDATION

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