

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 19, 2008
CONTACT: Michael Ott, Executive Officer (619) 531-5400

NEWS RELEASE

THE SAN DIEGO LAFCO ACTIVATES REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

SAN DIEGO— It's official. The County of San Diego is now providing structural fire protection and emergency medical services to 921,514 acres of unincorporated territory.

The action was formalized today by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and covers a major portion of the County that was devastated by the wildfires of 2003 and 2007.

"The San Diego County Regional Fire Authority is now in full force and effect," said LAFCO Executive Officer Michael Ott. "This marks the culmination of five years of diligent and collaborative work by LAFCO, public safety officials, policy makers and members of the public."

The Regional Fire Authority is organized under County Service Area No. 135, a dependent district governed by the five-member County Board of Supervisors. Structural fire protection and emergency medical services will be funded from the County general fund.

"Activating the fire protection powers for CSA 135 was an essential component of the County's decision last June to invest \$15.5 million annually in the fire enhancement program, which will provide stronger and better coordinated services to over 50 fire stations in the most fire prone areas of the region," said Vice Chairwoman Dianne Jacob of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Jacob is also the Chairwoman of the Task Force on Fire Protection and EMS and a member of LAFCO.

A Fire Warden position will be established to provide administrative support to the San Diego County Regional Fire Authority. The Fire Warden will assist in processing discretionary planning permits to ensure fire code compliance, help in updating fire codes, and provide administrative oversight for contracts with fire protection and emergency service providers.

"LAFCO's action is historic and will benefit generations to come through regionalizing emergency services," said LAFCO Chairman Andy Vanderlaan. Vanderlaan came to San Diego County in 1976 as the fire Chief of the North County Fire Protection District and retired from fire service in 1996. He served as the President of the California Fire Chiefs Association and was a member of the Governor's Proposition 172 Public Safety Committee.

The San Diego LAFCO is a state mandated agency responsible for reviewing and approving jurisdictional changes, such as annexations, consolidations, and formation of new agencies. The San Diego LAFCO was voted the most effective commission in the State of California in 1998, 2002 and 2004.