



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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Contact:

Phil Pitchford

Communications Officer

951-826-5975

ppitchford@riversideca.gov

Riverside Takes El Niño, Fire Message to Homeless Individuals

Effort aims to discourage camping in the Santa Ana River bottom due to fire, flood risk

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside conducted its latest outreach effort to homeless individuals living in the Santa Ana River bottom this morning and strongly encouraged people living there to leave the area to reduce the risk from El Niño-related storms and recent fires.

A team made up of Riverside Police officers, Code Enforcement officers and members of the city's Homeless Outreach Team ventured into the river bottom at about 7 a.m. today (11/10). They spent several hours passing out fliers to people living there and reminding them that camping is not permitted.

"Riverside truly cares about people and their property," Mayor Rusty Bailey said at a news conference after the event. "And we have services for Riversiders in need who are willing to accept those services and other forms of support."

Fliers distributed during the outreach event emphasized the danger of living in the Santa Ana River when the El Niño weather system is expected to dump large amounts of rain in the region this winter, increasing the risk of flash floods. The fliers also warned of fire danger in the river bottom, where four fires, including a 25-acre fire that threatened homes, have broken out in the past 9 days.

The fliers also included information about locations where homeless individuals can receive services designed to help them transition from homelessness to permanent housing. Representatives from Path of Life Ministries, which operates a local homeless shelter, and other agencies serving homeless individuals also attended the news conference.

Other speakers at the news conference included Police Lieutenant Bruce Blomdahl, Fire Battalion Chief Jennifer McDowell, Emergency Services Administrator Anthony Coletta and Community and Economic Development Deputy Director Emilio Ramirez.

Coletta emphasized that everyone needs to be prepared for El Niño. He encouraged residents to ensure they have adequate emergency supplies at their homes and in their vehicles and to be sure to clear out their gutters and downspouts at their homes and businesses.

The City of Riverside has expedited the clearing of storm drains and flood control channels, and the trimming of tree limbs and branches, Coletta said. Traffic control equipment, sand and sandbags are being pre-positioned around the city.

“Taking steps now to prepare will go a long way to minimizing impacts El Niño will have on us as a community,” Coletta said. “We are in this together, and we will get through this together.”