

STANISLAUS OPERATIONAL AREA ORGANIZATION

The *California Emergency Services Act* (the "Act" -- Government Code Section 8550 et seq.) was adopted to ensure that preparations within the state are adequate to deal with and mitigate the effects of natural, manmade, or war-caused emergencies that result in conditions of disaster or extreme peril to life. To further this end, the Act designated each county as an **Operational Area**. It is an intermediate level of the state emergency services organization that may be used for the coordination of emergency activities, and may serve as a link in the communications system during an emergency.

Stanislaus County and the cities of Ceres, Hughson, Modesto, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Turlock, and Waterford, executed an agreement (the "Agreement"), in 1998 (renewed in 2003). This Agreement recognized the county as an **Operational Area**, and established the **Stanislaus Operational Area Organization**.

The **Operational Area Organization** is a partnership for a systematic approach to exchanging information and resource requests in emergencies. The **Operational Area Organization** strengthens mutual coordination, provides a focal point and conduit for disaster information, assists in the efficient management of resources, and provides emergency preparedness through training and exercises.

The Agreement formed the **Operational Area Council**, whose job is to set the policies and procedures for the governance of the **Operational Area**, and approve its organizational structure. The members elect the **Operational Area Coordinator**, who is designated the chairperson. The **Operational Area Council** is comprised of one member from each of the parties to the Agreement, including: Ceres; Hughson; Modesto; Newman; Oakdale; Patterson; Riverbank; Stanislaus County; Turlock; and, Waterford.

The **Operational Area Council** meets at least quarterly, and more frequently as conditions warrant (for example, following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Council met weekly). Topics discussed at the meetings have included the following:

- National Incident Management System (NIMS) vs. Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS);
- Emergency Operation Plans and Workshops;
- Homeland Security Grants;
- Local Hazard Mitigation;
- Domestic Terrorism Task Force;
- West Nile virus;
- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Further information regarding the **Operational Area Organization and Council** may be obtained from the Stanislaus County Office of Emergency Services, (209) 552-3600.