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**Upcoming Issue in March 2012  
What is ICS?**



In the 1970s, as California was battling significant wildfires, emergency managers learned that the existing management structures -frequently unique to each agency -did not scale to dealing with massive mutual aid responses involving dozens of agencies. So find out next month how they remedied their issues using ICS.

**2012 Upcoming Topics**

**March**  
What is ICS?

**April**  
Learn about SEMS

**May**  
What is NIMS?

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FEMA: What is it?

**August**  
What School is Starting Again?

# City of Santa Barbara



## Get Ready Santa Barbara! Explore Emergency Management in 2012

### COMMUNICATION



What is communication? Communication as defined by Webster Dictionary is, “a verbal or written message, a) a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior, a system (as of telephones) for transmitting or exchanging information b) personnel engaged in transmitting or exchanging information”<sup>1</sup>

So why is it that communication is always the first thing that breaks down during a disaster?

We are society that thrives on communication and we want it quickly. However, we may not be able to communicate the way we normally do. Whatever the disastrous event, normal communications infrastructure is disrupted just at the time when you need it most. This is especially true in natural or technology disasters. Even a simple power outage can take down email, phones, and pagers.

When the lights are out some people are anxious or even frightened--they need to hear and understand what is happening. When you are creating a disaster plan, make sure you add a communication plan. Here’s a test, can you answer the following questions?

- How do I contact my family if I don’t have cell or phone service? How will my family contact me?
- Do I know how to contact my employer if I need to report to work after a disaster?
- What does my child’s school do during a disaster and what if I can’t get to them?
- What about family and friends in another State/City/Country; how do I let them know I am okay when there are no forms of communication?
- Do you know where to go for information; does your family?

Listed below are a few tips from the American Red Cross on how to add a communication plan to your disaster plan:

- **Pick Two Out-of-Town Emergency Contacts:**
  - A designated primary and alternate friend or family member who is unlikely to be affected by the same disaster event.
- **Emergency Contact Card**  
Both adults and children should know the primary and alternate contacts’ names, addresses, and home and cell telephone numbers. This information should be carried with them. Make copies for each member of the family.
  - Be sure to include an out-of-town contact. It may be easier to call out of the area if local phone lines are overloaded or out of service.
  - Teach your children how and when to call 911 for help. Post emergency telephone numbers by phones.
  - Complete the information on the [American Red Cross Emergency Contact Card \(PDF\)](#) and make copies for each member of your family to carry with them.
  - Use the Red Cross Safe and Well Website
    - The [Red Cross Safe and Well website](#) (Domestic Disasters in US only) should become an integral part of a Family Communication Plan. The Safe and Well website is an internet based tool that allows those directly affected by a disaster to let their loved ones know of their well-being.
- Other methods of communicating to friends and family member’s is through e-mail notification via a family distribution list and utilizing social media or simple texts via cell phone.

<sup>1</sup> Webster’s Dictionary

# Disaster Facts: Solar Flare

NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory and the Solar Heliospheric Observatory were among several spacecraft that recorded the strongest flare to erupt from the sun's surface thus far this year. The flare exploded into space on the afternoon of Friday January 27, 2012 at 1:37 p.m. EST, according to [Space.com](http://Space.com), and scientists labeled it an X-class eruption, the worst kind of solar flare.

Luckily, the location of the eruption, sunspot 1402, was facing away from the Earth. Scientists believe there will still be heightened levels of radiation from the coronal mass ejection (CME, the charged particles sent into space by the solar flare) but do not believe they pose a threat.

"The radiation storm will almost certainly be weaker," Doug Biesecker, a physicist at NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center, told SPACE.com. "The coronal mass ejection seems to be headed well away from Earth, which is good because this one seems like a bigger beast than the last one, but that's still preliminary."

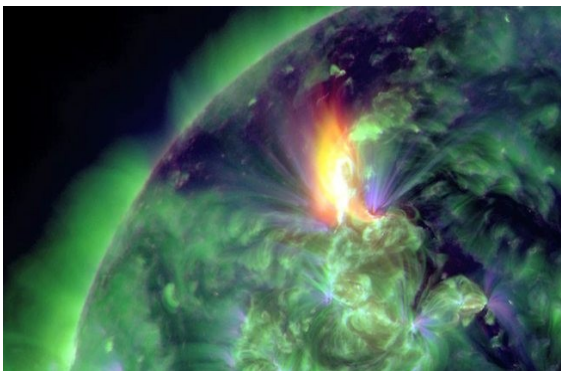
## Some Definitions:

**Sunspots:** are regions where the local magnetic field is very strong. The spots usually appear in pairs.

**Solar Flare:** an enormous explosion on the surface of the sun that occurs when a buildup of magnetic energy in the sun's atmosphere is suddenly released. Flares occur near sunspots, on the dividing line between areas of opposite magnetic polarity.

## Blowing Bubbles of Magnetic Disturbance.

Solar flares, the most powerful explosions in the solar system, can equal the intensity of 1 billion hydrogen bombs. Flares are often accompanied by a coronal mass ejection (CME), a huge bubble of magnetized gas blown outward from the sun. The bubble travels through space at about a million miles per hour, taking from 17



hours up to 3 days to cross the distance from the sun to the earth's orbit. If one of these huge masses hits the Earth, a disturbance in the Earth's magnetic field called a geomagnetic storm results. A powerful storm could damage electrical systems, cause power blackouts, knock out radio communications and disrupt Earth-orbiting satellites.

Source: [Space.com](http://Space.com)

## Radio Ready Program

"Radio Ready" is a partnership between the County Office of Emergency Management, the Orfalea Foundation and California Concern that works with local radio stations using satellite communications.

During an emergency you need information. The Office of Emergency Management works with local radio stations and other media in an attempt to get that information to you.

The Office of Emergency Management has partnered with many local radio stations to help get information out. Some of these stations have emergency generators that keep them on the air. Satellite phones have been deployed to radio stations with generator power that are more likely to stay on the air during long-term power outages.

Click on the Radio Ready logo to get a current listing of radio stations involved in this program.



## Did You Know:

### Texting is Better Than Voice Calling

Most wireless phones today have text messaging capabilities and permit the sending of short messages between mobile phones, other handheld devices, and even landline telephones. During an emergency voice networks can become congested or overloaded. Unfortunately, this may result in people not being connected to friends and loved ones. Text messages, however, use far less bandwidth than a normal voice call and therefore, are more reliable in trying to communicate with loved ones in these types of circumstances. So, even if a network is over congested with voice calls, your text message to your friends and family will have a much higher likelihood of getting through than a phone call. It also means that during an emergency, you are freeing up the voice lines for public safety officials to use.

## City of Santa Barbara Office of Emergency Services



OES is on the web!

<http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/OES>

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## City News

On Thursday January 26, 2012, the City held a Functional Exercise that simulated a 6.8 magnitude earthquake. The City activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Department Operating Centers (DOC). The exercise was to test the response capabilities of the staff and test communication flow from the field crews, to the DOC and eventually into the EOC. The exercise was a huge success and gaps were identified that will be used as training opportunities for City staff. These exercises are important in making sure that our plans are kept up-to-date and that staff are familiar with their roles within the EOC or DOC. The City's Office of Emergency Services will continue to work with other City Departments on improving response plans throughout the City.