



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ventura County Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)

Names 2-1-1 Ventura County as Source for Thomas Fire Recovery Information

CAMARILLO, CA – Ventura County VOAD recently named 2-1-1 Ventura County, a program of Interface Children & Family Services in partnership with the County of Ventura, local cities, First 5 Ventura County, United Way of Ventura County and the Ventura County Community Foundation, as the community’s main source for Thomas Fire recovery information. Because of Interface's expertise having provided emergency communications support to other local, Northern California and out of state 2-1-1's during a series of disasters in 2017, the 2-1-1 Ventura County team is positioned to serve in this pivotal role.

“2-1-1 Ventura County is a member of VOAD - their experience assisting other regions during national tragedies including the Las Vegas Mass Shooting, Hurricanes Harvey and Irma and the fires in Northern California, make them the obvious choice for easy access to information that will help our county recover,” said Maggie Tougas, Ventura County VOAD Chair. “VOAD’s collaboration with 2-1-1 Ventura County was a natural fit.”

Erik Sternad, Interface’s Executive Director, emphasized the dedication of the 2-1-1 Ventura County team - “Under the threat of their own family’s evacuation and challenges getting to work, our 2-1-1 Ventura County staff put others’ safety first answering calls for information and texting individuals who were without power during the first stages of the Thomas Fire. When the Montecito Mudslide occurred, we were prepared to support emergency efforts providing lifesaving information to residents who understandably had already been through so much.”

To date, 2-1-1 Ventura County has assisted 1,800 Ventura County residents via phone looking to safely evacuate, for shelter locations, available financial assistance, location of missing persons and information about FEMA applications due to the Thomas Fire. 2-1-1 responded to over 10,000 texts in English and Spanish requesting information on the Thomas Fire and mudslides. 24 contact specialists have been on the front lines, live, 24/7 to provide the information needed in English and Spanish, via call, 2-way-text and online at 211ventura.org.

Soon after the fire, a 2-1-1 contact specialist received a text from an active duty military member who stated that he and his family were struggling attempting to recover from the trauma they had experienced from the fire. He confided that he was currently suffering from PTSD. The stress from evacuating his home due to the fire had inhibited his ability to find financial and emotional support he and his family needed. The 2-1-1 Ventura County contact specialist explained the resources that were available to his family and immediately connected him with the Ventura County Thomas Fire Service Center.

"People don't realize that even though the flames are out and the rain has stopped, individuals are still suffering, needing access to physical and mental health resources," said 2-1-1 Ventura County Director Kelly Brown. "Our team is currently reaching out via text to residents of Ventura and Ojai who texted for assistance in the past several weeks to check in with them and offer mental health and wellness support resources. Our ability to staff two-way texting with bi-lingual contact specialists was made possible through funding from Kaiser Permanente and a new grant from Dignity Health who both join Interface in a commitment to making it easier for highly compromised populations to access the help they need. An example of this is a text Interface received from a concerned resident whose elderly parents reside in Montecito. They did not have phone service and were in need of evacuating due to water beginning to flood their home from the creek next door. A 2-1-1 Ventura County contact specialist provided the couple's name and address to Office of Emergency Services for emergency rescue. 2-1-1 Ventura County called back later in the day to confirm with a grateful daughter that her parents were safely evacuated."

Residents and concerned loved ones affected by the fire and mudslide can call 2-1-1, text keyword "StormInfo" to 898-211 (or "tormenta" for Spanish text) or visit icfs.org for up-to-date information, including road closures, Thomas Fire recovery resources and storm information.

Programs like Interface's 2-1-1 exist because of caring community members. To support these efforts and ensure 2-1-1 will be around for our community when disaster strikes again, text keyword 211VC to 898-211 to make a donation or visit icfs.org.

2-1-1 is a comprehensive information and referral service for Ventura County and surrounding areas connecting community members with information about health and human services available to them. If you or someone you know is in need of confidential, 24/7 assistance in the areas of food, mental health counseling, housing, health care, senior services, information

during times of disaster, including road closures and shelters, call 2-1-1, text zip code to 898-211, or click 211ventura.org.

About 2-1-1 Ventura County

2-1-1 Ventura County, a program of Interface Children & Family Services, is the comprehensive information and referral service for Ventura County, connecting more than 30,000 Ventura County callers and texters each year to information about health and human services. 2-1-1 Ventura County phone and text services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in 150 languages through live operators and phone interpretation services. Launched on February 11, 2005, 2-1-1 Ventura County was the first active 2-1-1 in the state of California. In 2017, Interface became the only 2-1-1 providing 24-hour text access alongside 2-1-1 calls and online information. 2-1-1 Ventura County connects more than 3,000 visitors per month to user friendly guided search resources located on the **211Ventura.org** website. In response to the recent Thomas Fire disaster, 2-1-1 Ventura added two-way texting available 24/7 in English and Spanish, one of few nationwide to offer this service.

During times of disaster, 2-1-1 provides incident specific information in coordination with local emergency services, including road closures and shelters both locally and nationwide.

About Interface Children & Family Services

Interface Children & Family Services is Ventura County and surrounding community's most comprehensive non-profit human services safety net. Founded in 1973, Interface works to prevent and heal the effects of child abuse, neglect and abandonment; domestic violence; family conflict and mental health issues.

Interface has 24 distinct programs representing six core service areas, including mental health and trauma treatment, domestic violence and child abuse prevention, youth crisis intervention, human trafficking and justice services.

Serving approximately 42,000 local individuals annually, plus assisting 150,000 callers through the 2-1-1 helpline across the state, Interface offers effective solutions to the urgent needs of families and individuals in crisis. This important work is sustained through donations and grants from individuals and organizations, as well as by the work of dedicated volunteers and staff. For more information please contact Interface Children & Family Services at 4001 Mission Oaks Blvd, Suite I, Camarillo, CA 93012 by telephone at 805.485.6114 or visit www.icfs.org.

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2-1-1 Ventura County's Assistance with Thomas Fire Recovery and Storm Information

Because of Interface's expertise having provided emergency communications support to other local, Northern California and national disasters including the Las Vegas shooting this past year, our 2-1-1 team was positioned to respond to the Thomas Fire and Montecito Mudslide. During the Montecito Mudslide, 2-1-1 was the primary source for information relayed by local media outlets. Here are a sampling of statistics that demonstrate the positive impact of 2-1-1 Ventura County, a program of Interface:

- 2-1-1 Ventura County received over 450 calls during the first 2 days of the Thomas Fire which is more than double our normal call volume.
- 2-1-1 received over 700 calls during the first 2 days of the mudslide crisis which would typically represent an entire month of calls.
- 2-1-1 has taken 1800 Ventura County calls in total for Thomas Fire information.
- 2-1-1 Ventura County received 2:1 Spanish language calls during the fires and slides.
- 2-1-1 has taken over 6000 Santa Barbara calls for Thomas Fire and Mudslide information.
- 2-1-1 responded to over 10,000 texts in English and Spanish requesting information on the Thomas Fire and Mudslides.
- 50% of texters during the disaster were over 50 years of age a change from usual 13%.
- 2-1-1 used texting to reach out via text to thousands in Ventura County and Montecito that texted for assistance before, during and after the fires and mudslides to offer mental health and wellness support resources to help the community heal after this crisis.
- 2-1-1 developed a process to get seniors and disabled residents in voluntary evacuation areas to safety during disaster through a partnership with VCTC.

(Turn over to learn more about 2-1-1 Ventura County's involvement nationwide.)

Strengthening children, families and communities to be safe, healthy and thriving

Mental Health & Trauma Treatment · Domestic Violence & Child Abuse Prevention · Youth Crisis Intervention

Human Trafficking · Reentry Services · 2-1-1 Information & Referral

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2017/2018 Disaster Assistance Map



Thomas Fire & Mudslides

- Responded to 6,800 calls.
- Helped 10,000 via text message to find available disaster & Recovery information.
- Sent out counseling and support group information to 2-1-1 texters.

Northern California Wildfires

- Responded to 1,456 overflow calls.
- Scoured dozens of Twitter and Facebook feeds, webpages, and emergency texts and combined the information in one place – the 2-1-1 state and national shared database.

Las Vegas Mass Shooting

- Helped hundreds of distressed individuals searching for family, friends, and loved ones who had been at the concert.
- Collected identifying information about missing persons that was compared with data from the coroner and local hospitals.

Hurricane Harvey

Hurricane Irma

Hurricanes Harvey & Irma

- Answered texts from Florida residents seeking road closure, shelter and meals and coordinated with the State of Texas to take overflow calls from residents fleeing the hurricane.
- After the hurricanes, responded to calls and texts with information on how to find missing persons, apply for FEMA assistance, request emergency food stamp cards, and access food pantries.
- Talked with and texted with 1,031 people affected by the hurricanes.