

The CAO Weekly Report

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Monterey County Administrative Office

Lew C. Bauman, CAO

In this edition:

- County Hazard Mitigation Plan gets national attention
- Child Support Services rings the bell for successful child support collections
- Sheriff's Office warning about tax time ID theft

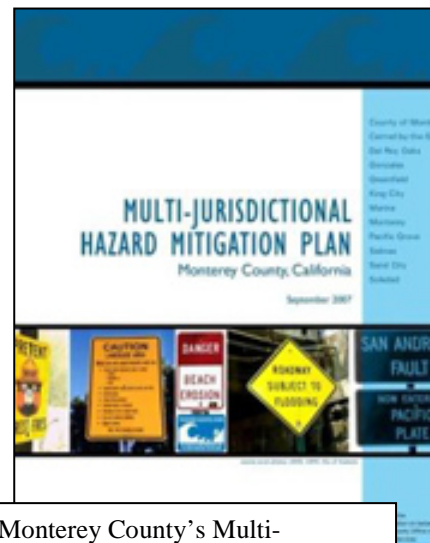


County Hazard Mitigation Plan Showcased by National Association of Counties

Monterey County's Hazard Mitigation Plan and the efforts behind it are featured in a National Association of Counties (NACo) report on counties which are reducing their vulnerability to the threats of severe weather conditions. The full report, "[Severe Weather Adaptation: Coastal Resiliency County Case Studies Volume 2](#)," is available on the NACo website and features Monterey County as well as Monmouth New Jersey and Calvert County, Maryland.

By definition, hazard mitigation is 'any action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from natural hazards.'

According to NACo, in 2011, weather disasters cost the United States more than \$35 billion. The



Monterey County's Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

aim of the report is to share successful efforts in reducing the threats and results of weather disasters with other communities.

In the Monterey County case study article, the unique partnerships created to update the existing hazard mitigation plan are explored. Both NACo and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) are partners in the plan process as is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Monterey County was designated a national pilot community for incorporating data and tools available through NOAA's 'Digital Coast' into its hazard mitigation planning. 'Digital Coast' is a web-based platform which offers powerful tools to assist users in accessing data on coastal vulnerability, simulating projections of impacts, creating publishable visualizations and 'snapshots' of potential future scenarios, including risk assessments taking climate change issues such as sea level rise into consideration.



NACo became a partner in the county planning process when it was contacted by NOAA and Digital Coast for assistance in the development of the community outreach portion of the plan. NACo has been a national supporter of Digital Coast since 2008 and was intrigued with the integration of sea level rise in a hazard mitigation plan and how communities would react to it. NACo provided funding for community outreach efforts which were completed last year.

"The Hazard Mitigation Plan is in final draft form and has been submitted to the State of California for review," explains Emergency Services Manager Sherrie Collins, who says the plan still has more stops along the way to final approval. "Once the State has completed its review, it will be forwarded to FEMA. If FEMA approves, it will be sent back to us with a tentative approval pending adoption by all cities and the county. I anticipate that we will have the plan fully adopted by the end of 2015."

The final draft overview can be found on the [Office of Emergency Services website](#).

Collins says the news about Monterey County's Hazard Mitigation Plan efforts is getting around. After the case studies document came out, she was contacted by a number of climate change symposiums to speak, and will be a featured speaker at the California American Planners Association meeting in October.



Child Support Services Staff 'Ring the Bell' for Success in Bringing in Overdue Child Support Payments

Ring the



Among its many services to families in Monterey County, Child Support Services (CSS) advocates for and enforces child support orders, helping custodial parents collect overdue support payments. Collecting child support monies is no easy task and in many cases, staff must be creative and persistent when parents, out of the home, are behind in their payments. Here are some examples of the extraordinary lengths staff have gone through to make sure children receive the support to which they are entitled. Several years ago, staff started a program celebrating those who've secured a difficult collection to "come ring the bell."

Here are some recent success stories that have the bells ringing in that department!

Everyone Wins

A parent called CSS to advise she won money in the lottery and was informed by the lottery folks that part of her winnings would go to pay past due child support. Mary Lamb, Child Support Officer II, got the call and explained the process. Mary also continued to follow up with the parent until the money was received. \$8,446.21 was paid, nearly the entire amount of past due support owed.

Research Pays Off

A parent, with his attorney, filed a claim of exemption to a bank levy for past due child support. Victoria Davis, Child Support Attorney, appeared at the hearing and thanks to research regarding this parent's finances by Supervising Child Support Officer Danny Gutierrez, Victoria was able to show the parent's attorney the evidence and his attorney conceded. \$11,869.00 owed in child support was paid.

Compromise Pays Off

Dawn Yonemitsu, Legal Assistant and Josie Ramirez, Child Support Officer II worked on a case together and the result is they collected \$10,000.00 for a COAP (Compromise of Arrears Program) lump sum payment! COAP payments are typically a reduced amount to pay off owed monies, but in this case, the agreed amount paid off child support monies owed in both Monterey and Sonoma counties.

Leave No Stone Unturned

Department staff will leave no stone unturned or types of funds unchecked when it comes to collecting past due amounts. CSS is mandated by federal and state laws to collect overdue child support. The department can file a QDRO, "Qualified Domestic Relations Order," which can be attached to a parent's retirement funds and be required to be paid when monies are taken out. This capability has allowed the department to effectively collect on some long overdue collections.

In one such case, Legal Assistant Dawn Yonemitsu prepared the order and dealt with the Administrator of a 401K plan. There was a problem in the deposit-transmission of the funds and that is when Suzan Wurz, Accounting Clerical Supervisor, stepped in to resolve. Suzan tracked down the problem and helped make sure the money went to the correct person at the State Disbursement Unit so the money would be posted correctly. Payment received: \$27,201.79!

Inheritance Windfalls

A parent received an inheritance and a bank levy was issued for child support monies owed. Pam Monteith, Child Support Officer II, offered the parent a chance to file a claim of exemption, but he never followed through with the required documents. A total of \$26,491.69 in child support was paid.

Martina Suarez, Child Support Officer II, was reviewing one of two cases with money owed by the same parent. When contacting the parent to discuss payment, she found that the parent had received an inheritance. Martina worked the two separate cases, both owing child support monies and negotiated amounts for payment. This persistent review of cases resulted in \$8,000.00 paid on each outstanding case!



Sheriff's Office Warns about Tax Identity Theft

As you prepare to file your tax return, the Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit says be wary of thieves trying to beat you to the punch. Tax identity theft is one of the fastest growing forms of theft in the United States.



Tax identity theft typically occurs when personal information is stolen to create a fraudulent refund. It can involve:

- Filing a tax return using another person's social security number
- Claiming someone else's children as dependents
- Claiming a tax refund using a deceased taxpayer's information.

A typical identity theft starts when thieves illegally buy or steal information from individuals, employers, hospitals, nursing homes or other similar places. With a social security number or list of numbers, they file false tax returns. In one case, investigators found a single address that was used to file 2,137 tax returns for \$3.3 million in refunds!

For victims, often the first sign that they've become a victim of tax identity theft

wouldn't come until **after** they'd filed a return and received a notice from the IRS that more than one return was filed for them. By that time though, the scammer has likely pocketed the refund from the fraudulent return.

So how to protect yourself? Consider these safety tips:

- **Do** mail tax returns as early in the tax season as possible before the cons beat you to it
- **Don't** give out personal information unless you know who's asking for it and why they need it
- **Do** shred personal and financial documents
- **Do** know your tax preparer
- **Do** check the status of your refund after filing

If you think someone used your social security number for a tax refund or the IRS sends you a notice or letter indicating a problem, contact the IRS immediately! You can reach the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490 or <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Identity-Protection>

More questions? Contact the Monterey County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit, 759-6675 or 647-7909.

