



**Cal OES**

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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## 2015 WATERMAN TERRORIST ATTACK After Action/Corrective Action Report

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February 2019

**Gavin Newsom**  
Governor

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Director  
Governor's Office of Emergency Services

**Prepared by the Cal OES Preparedness Branch**

# **2015 WATERMAN TERRORIST ATTACK**

## **After Action / Corrective Action Report**

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## FOREWORD

In accordance with the *Emergency Services Act, Article 9.5, Government Code Section 8607(f)*, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) shall, in cooperation with involved state and local agencies, complete an After Action Report (AAR) after each gubernatorial proclaimed disaster. Supporting Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) regulations require that jurisdictions "declaring a local emergency for which the governor proclaims a state of emergency, and any state agency responding to that emergency, shall complete and transmit an after action report to Cal OES within 90 days of the close of the incident period."

An After Action/Corrective Action Report serves the following important functions:

- Provides a source for documenting response and early recovery activities
- Identifies problems and successes during emergency operations
- Analyzes the effectiveness of the different components of SEMS
- Describes and defines a plan of corrective action for implementing recommended improvements to existing emergency response efforts

This report shall provide a review of public safety response and disaster recovery activities and shall be made available by Cal OES within 120 days of the close of incident to all interested public safety and emergency management organizations.

If you are interested in reviewing the additional documentation gathered to develop this report, please submit your request to:  
[SharedMail.CalAAR@CalOES.ca.gov](mailto:SharedMail.CalAAR@CalOES.ca.gov)

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Summary Overview**

On December 2, 2015, the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health held a departmental semi-annual all-staff meeting and training event at the Inland Regional Center (IRC) located in the City of San Bernardino with 80 employees in attendance. As the event transitioned into a department holiday party at about 1059 hours, two shooters armed with long guns and improvised explosive devices opened fire inside the IRC. The shooting rampage ended with 14 people killed and 26 more wounded. Among the deceased were two police officers. Further loss of life was averted by the quick response of the San Bernardino Police Department, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office, San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services, California Highway Patrol (CHP), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Unfortunately, this was not the end of the rampage.

In the confusion immediately following the mass shooting, the two shooters fled the scene in a black SUV. Police quickly located the shooters and a pursuit ensued that led to a gun battle between the two shooters and police. The two shooters were killed by officers. Shortly after the investigation began the FBI declared the incident an act of terrorism. The attack was the deadliest mass shooting in the U.S. since the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, and the deadliest terrorist attack to occur in the U.S. since the September 11, 2001 attacks.

As a result of the shooting and its magnitude, the County of San Bernardino proclaimed a local emergency and the Governor proclaimed a State of Emergency ordering the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to assist the San Bernardino County Division of Environmental Health Services until the County was able to resume normal staffing levels that were impacted as a result of the shooting.

### **Incident Period**

December 2, 2015 – December 28, 2015

### **Type of Incident**

Terrorist Attack

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**Location**

City of San Bernardino

**Declarations and Proclamations**

**Local**

- County of San Bernardino proclaimed a Local Emergency December 10, 2015
  - City of San Bernardino proclaimed a Local Emergency December 11, 2015
  - City of Redlands proclaimed a Local Emergency December 11, 2015
  - City of Rialto proclaimed a Local Emergency December 11, 2015

**State**

- Governor Brown declared a State of Emergency December 18, 2015, authorizing California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) funding

**Federal**

None

**Statistical Summary**

Fatalities: 14

Injuries: 26

**SUMMARY OF SUCCESS**

- Overall coordination of agencies externally and internally went well in part due to all of the prior training, exercises, and activations in which the agencies participated together.
- Organizational leaders showed a united front in formulating and implementing an effective response to the attack. Responders from various agencies with differing priorities and protocols worked together to clear and investigate three different scenes in an effective and efficient manner.
- Successful coordination led to the survival of every wounded person that was transported to a hospital.



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- Both responders and victims of the terrorist attacks in San Bernardino reported that active shooter training had taught them the skills they needed to protect themselves and others.

**AREAS OF CONCERN**

- First responders were put in a potentially dangerous situation as radio communications were broadcasted in real-time across the U.S. during the attack, on YouTube and other network systems potentially exposing apprehension tactics used by law enforcement.
- Issues with information gathering and rumor control hindered the development of accurate situational awareness.
- Improvement is needed for better coordination between local hospitals and field personnel during mass-casualty incidents (MCI).

**ORGANIZATIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS REPORT**

**State Agencies**

Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)

- Cal OES Law Enforcement Branch
- Cal OES Southern Region
- Cal OES State Threat Assessment Center (STAC)

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

**Operational Areas**

San Bernardino County OES

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**DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS**

On Wednesday, December 2, 2015, 80 employees from the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health attended a departmental all-staff meeting and training event at the IRC located in the City of San Bernardino. Among those in attendance was Syed Rizwan Farook, a county Environmental Health Specialist. During the meeting Mr. Farook left the building but later returned with his wife, Tashfeen Malik. Both were dressed in dark tactical military-style gear, armed with long guns and improvised explosive devices. Once inside the building, they both opened fire on the unsuspecting crowd of people. The shooting rampage ended with 14 people dead and 26 injured.

When police began to arrive, the two suspects escaped in the confusion and left the scene in a black SUV. Fortunately, police spotted the couple in the SUV and a pursuit ensued. Once the suspects were stopped by police another gun battle took place between police and the two suspects. Both suspects were killed on scene. Two police officers were injured as well.

A review of the timeline revealed that police arrived at the IRC within three minutes and 32 seconds after the initial 9-1-1 emergency calls. Police immediately closed roads in the area to traffic. The San Bernardino Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team happened to be conducting its monthly training exercise a few miles away from the scene at the time of the attack, which allowed them to arrive at the scene within 11 minutes.

Ultimately, nearly 300 law enforcement officers and agents from city, county, state, and federal agencies responded to the active-shooter event, converging on the IRC as people were evacuated. The FBI and the Los Angeles Police Department counter-terrorism unit were called in to assist. Explosive devices placed at the IRC by the shooters were discovered by an FBI SWAT officer. The devices were later detonated individually by a bomb squad.

Back at the scene where the pursuit terminated authorities feared that the suspect vehicle could contain explosives, a motorized battering ram with a protective shield known as the "Rook" was used to check the SUV for any explosive devices like the ones located at the IRC. No explosives were in the vehicle. In all, seven police agencies were involved in the final gun battle, with 23 officers firing their weapons at the suspects. The suspects fired at least 81 rounds at police. Nearly 2,500 rounds of .223-caliber and 9mm ammunition were recovered from the vehicle, along with medical supplies and a trigger apparatus believed to be for the explosives left behind at the IRC.

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According to the FBI's investigation, the perpetrators were "homegrown violent extremists" inspired by foreign terrorist groups. FBI investigators said that Farook and Malik had become radicalized over several years prior to the attack. The couple had amassed a large stockpile of weapons, ammunition, and bomb-making equipment in their home which was one of three crime scenes associated with this incident.

In the course of the ensuing investigation, law enforcement officials processed three separate crime scenes (the IRC, the location of the gun battle, and the suspects' home). It was not until the investigation was well underway before officials could classify the incident from a mass shooting incident to a terrorist attack. The investigation revealed that Syed Rizwan Farook was a U.S.-born citizen of Pakistani descent, who worked as a health department employee. Tashfeen Malik was a Pakistani-born lawful permanent resident of the United States.

### **RESPONSE ACTIVITIES**

The challenges confronting the principal public safety agencies that responded to this attack were significant. The following complexities are what caused the challenges:

- The existence of three crime scenes
- Multiple local, state, and federal agencies arriving with sometimes overlapping roles and responsibilities
- The processing of hundreds of victim and witness statements
- Differing policies and practices as well as different organizational cultures
- The use of non-interoperable communications systems and differing protocols
- A nation and world watching and waiting for answers

The fluidity of every aspect of the attack and its aftermath required decisions to be made on the spot, in less than opportune situations, with the media—and social media—broadcasting every move in real time.

Within four minutes of the first 9-1-1 calls of the shooting, first responders began to arrive. Four hours later, the suspects engaged officers in a gun battle that ended the assailants' lives. In those chaotic hours, multiple local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, firefighters, and medical personnel responded to three separate scenes including the IRC, the officer-involved shooting scene, and the assailants' residence. They collectively sought to secure the scenes, treat and transport the injured, investigate the incidents, address the

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media and the public, and identify and locate the assailants, all while facing threats of secondary attacks and possible explosive detonations.

The preliminary investigation that followed revealed that the assailants planned, targeted, and attacked Farook's coworkers in an act of terrorism. On all accounts, the public safety first response to the shooting was exemplary. First responders utilized their training and skills to act quickly and decisively in a horrifying situation.

The San Bernardino Police and Sheriff's Department public information officers (PIO) fielded requests from the continuously growing crowd of media. The public affairs team quickly established a unified process for communicating with the public. The PIO staff used an interactive electronic screen that was visible to all officers to provide consistent information that would not jeopardize event operations and the impending investigations. The team monitored news outlets and channels to anticipate questions and address rumors that were circulating. Command staff leaders made a decision to allow public affairs specialists to attend high-level strategy sessions, enabling them to participate in critical discussions that made it easier to relay information to the public. These strategies allowed PIOs to focus on other critical tasks, rather than answering the same questions from multitudes of reporters.

### **Emergency Operations Center (EOC) / Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC) / Department Operations Center (DOC) Activations**

#### **December 2, 2015**

- Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency (ICEMA) DOC activated.
- San Bernardino County Operational Area (SBCOA) EOC was activated to a Level I.
- Cal OES Southern REOC activated to a Level I.
- San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department DOC activated.
- City of Ontario EOC was activated at a Level I.
- City of Loma Linda EOC was activated at a Level I.
- Caltrans District 8 EOC activated at a Level I.
- City of Fontana Unified School District activated the DOC as a precaution only.

#### **December 3, 2015**

- San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health activated their DOC.
- City of Redlands EOC activated at Level I.

**Cal OES State Operations Center (SOC) / Region Emergency Operation Center (REOC)**

The SOC provided the coordination of government resources to support the responding entities. The SOC organized with CDPH, Caltrans, and Cal OES Fire to provide all of the additional services to support the local responders. The Cal OES Law Enforcement Branch immediately activated to provide additional support and coordination to the local entities. Cal OES Southern Region emergency management provided support at the San Bernardino County EOC.

**Cal OES State Threat Assessment Center Operations (STAC)**

The STAC range of support during and following the December 2nd San Bernardino terrorist attack included surge support to Southern California Fusion Centers, executive briefings and situational awareness, statewide information coordination, social media geo-fencing efforts, and classified threat intelligence monitoring. The STAC primarily focused on facilitating the flow of information to ensure state decision makers were kept informed of key developments during and post-attack in order to ensure the state's emergency response efforts were coordinated with field level developments.

The STAC's response to the terrorist attacks on December 2nd began in the morning hours following initial reports of a shooting in San Bernardino.

Soon after the events unfolded and it became clear there was a terrorism nexus, the STAC began coordinating and gathering information from its internal Awareness and Response Team (ART), the Joint Regional Intelligence Center (JRIC), the Cal OES Law Enforcement Branch, as well as other side channels of intelligence and law enforcement officials. The STAC began to package all-source intelligence products and situational awareness updates in direct support of the Director of Cal OES.

The STAC coordinated with the State Threat Assessment System (STAS) and federal partners like Department of Homeland Security (DHS), National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC), and the FBI to ensure there was a collaborative effort, cohesion, and consistency built in to all situational awareness updates to the Director. The STAC was a clearinghouse of all-source intelligence and situational awareness with direct support being provided to the Director during the attack and early stages of the investigation.

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San Bernardino County immediately responded to the attack with all of its available resources including deploying law enforcement personnel, fire personnel, and emergency personnel. San Bernardino County was assisted in its efforts by the CHP, the FBI, and other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

**Caltrans**

Caltrans activated their EOC. Caltrans closed the eastbound I-10 off ramp at Waterman to reduce the risk to additional motorists in the area.

**California Department of Public Health (CDPH)**

In the aftermath of the disaster, CDPH provided the personnel to work at the San Bernardino County Environmental Health Department in place of the local department personnel devastated by the shooting incident. A total of 14 CDPH personnel were mission tasked to temporarily fill key county environmental health functions including mental health services, solid waste monitoring, drinking water monitoring, medical waste monitoring, and detention facility food monitoring.

**San Bernardino County**

In addition to the response by the San Bernardino Police Department as well as the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office, other city and county entities provided the following support to ensure increased public safety and recovery:

- San Bernardino County City Unified School District initiated a district wide lock-down of schools and offices.
- Metrolink (line 308) stopped service at Rialto Station during the incident.
- The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department established a 24-hour Sheriff/Coroner information line.
  
- San Bernardino County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) were deployed.
- San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Services were deployed, including:
  - Seven Crisis Response Team Counselors deployed to the Rudy Hernandez Community Center.
  - Twelve Crisis Response Team Counselors deployed to the Family Assistance Center (FAC). Fourteen families were counseled.
- San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Services Also:
  - Established three facilities available for crisis walk-in services.

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- Established a crisis phone line for immediate crisis services.
- Established a Reunification Center at the Hampton Inn and in the City of Highland

### **American Red Cross (ARC)**

The following is a list of the support services provided by ARC:

- Disaster Mental Health volunteers provided assistance at the Rudy Hernandez Community Center to support family reunification and the Family Assistance Center (FAC).
- One ARC canteen supported FAC operations.
- One ARC canteen supported the City of Redlands Police Department Incident Command Post (ICP) at the suspects' home.

### **Federal**

Participating Federal Law Enforcement entities:

- Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).
- Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI).
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

### **RECOVERY ACTIVITIES**

- A FAC was opened at the Hampton Inn and Suites in San Bernardino.
- The FBI took over as the leading federal law enforcement agency on the case, treating the probe as a counter-terrorism investigation.

### **SUMMARY OF SUCCESS**

- Overall coordination of agencies externally and internally went well in part due to all of the prior training, exercises, and activations in which the agencies participated together. Organizational leaders showed a united front in formulating and implementing an effective response to the attack. Responders from various agencies with differing priorities and protocols worked together to clear and investigate three different scenes in an effective and efficient manner.
- Successful coordination led to the survival of every wounded person that was transported to a hospital.

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- Both responders and victims of the terrorist attacks in San Bernardino reported that active shooter training had taught them the skills they needed to protect themselves and others.

**AREAS OF CONCERN**

- First responders were put in a potentially dangerous situation as radio communications were broadcasted in real-time across the U.S. during the attack, on YouTube and other network systems potentially exposing apprehension tactics used by law enforcement.
- Issues with information gathering and rumor control hindered the development of accurate situational awareness.
- Improvement is needed for better coordination between local hospitals and field personnel during mass-casualty incidents (MCI).

**CORRECTIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Improve law enforcement communication with fully encrypted inter-operable radio frequencies.
- Develop improved event information gathering guidelines in order to maintain accurate situational awareness.
- Create and implement a county wide Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) notification and response protocol to ensure an equitable distribution of patients so as not to overwhelm any one emergency room.



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAR	After Action Report
AFN	Access and Functional Needs
ALS	Advanced Life Support
AMR	American Medical Response
ARC	American Red Cross
ART	Awareness Response Team
BLS	Basic Life Support
CALFIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Cal OES	California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CDAAC	California Disaster Assistance Act
CDPH	California Department of Public Health
CHP	California Highway Patrol
CNG	California National Guard
COAD	Community Organizations Active in Disaster
DBH	Department of Behavioral Services, San Bernardino
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOC	Department Operations Center
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FAC	Family Assistance Center
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HSI	Homeland Security Investigations
ICEMA	Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency
ICP	Incident Command Post
ICS	Incident Command System
IMT	Incident Management Team
IRC	Inland Regional Center
JIC	Joint Information Center
JRIC	Joint Regional Intelligence Center
LAC	Local Assistance Center
LLUMC	Loma Linda University Medical Center
MCI	Mass Casualty Incident
NCTC	National Counter Terrorism Center
NSA	National Security Agency
OA	Operational Area
OES	Office of Emergency Services
PIO	Public Information Officer

RDMHS	Regional Disaster Medical Health Specialist
REOC	Regional Emergency Operations Center
SBCOA	San Bernardino County Operational Area
SBCSD	San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
SEMS	Standardized Emergency Management System
SOC	State Operations Center
STAC	State Threat Assessment Center
STAS	State Threat Assessment System
SUV	Sports Utility Vehicle
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
VOST	Virtual Operations Support Team

**ISSUES AND CORRECTIVE ACTION MATRIX**

**ISSUES AND CORRECTIVE ACTION MATRIX**

Agency	EF	Category/EF Title	Problem Statement/Issue	Corrective Action / Improvement Plan	Key Players
San Bernardino County	2	2	First responders were put in a potentially dangerous situation as radio communications were broadcasted in real-time across the U.S. during the attack, on YouTube and other network systems potentially exposing apprehension tactics used by law enforcement.	Improve law enforcement communication with fully encrypted inter-operable radio frequencies.	San Bernardino County Law
San Bernardino County	15	15	Issues with information gathering and rumor control hindered the development of accurate situational awareness.	Develop improved event information gathering guidelines in order to maintain accurate situational awareness.	San Bernardino County OES
San Bernardino County	8	8	Improvement is needed for better coordination between local hospitals and field personnel during mass-casualty incidents (MCI).	Create and implement a county wide Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) notification and response protocol to ensure an equitable distribution of patients so as not to overwhelm any one emergency room.	San Bernardino County OES

**RESPONSE SUMMARY**

**State and local agencies response activities chart** The following chart summarizes the activities of local and state agencies/departments during the 2015 Terror Attack. It reflects the various mutual aid systems (fire and rescue, law enforcement, medical), as well as other state response capabilities.

Note: Agencies and organizations should provide specific information on personnel and equipment deployment if available. N/A= data not available or not submitted.

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
San Bernardino County Fire	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
Deployed County Fire Type 3 Incident Management Team (IMT).			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
Dispatched a Pilatus PC-12 Surveillance Aircraft to the San Bernardino area.			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
Caltrans	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
Caltrans crews closed off the eastbound and westbound lanes on I-15 freeway at Waterman.			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
San Bernardino Police	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
Dispatched battering ram to enter suspect's complex due to possible unknown devices.			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
American Medical Response (AMR) Riverside	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
Dispatched two Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance strike teams.			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
Mission Ambulance	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
Dispatched one Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance strike team.			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Services (DBH)	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Dispatched seven Crisis Response Team Counselors to the Rudy Hernandez Community Center.</li> <li>-Dispatched twelve Crisis Response Team Counselors to the Family Assistance Center at the Hampton Inn and Suites.</li> <li>-Established three facilities for crisis walk-in services.</li> <li>-Established a crisis phone line for immediate crisis services.</li> </ul>			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
San Bernardino County Sheriff Coroner	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Assigned two officers for perimeter security at 20 locations of interest: Family Assistance Center, crime scenes, government center, coroner, sheriff headquarters, Loma Linda University Medical Center, and other locations.</li> <li>-Established a 24-hour Sheriff/ Coroner information line.</li> </ul>			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
CDPH	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
CDPH filled request for a Division Chief for the San Bernardino County Environmental Health department.			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
U.S. Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
Assigned officers for crime scene perimeter security.			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
San Bernardino County OES	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Activities:</b>			
Deployed three Emergency Services Officers to each of the three locations (Hampton Inn and Suites, Rudy Hernandez Community Center, and Rock Church) where the victims were transported to be interviewed.			

Agency/Dept.	Period of Commitment	Personnel	Equipment
Cal OES	12/2/2015	5	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cal OES Assistant Chief, OES 5216 responded to the Incident and demobilized the same day.</li> <li>• The Cal OES Law Enforcement Chief and a Cal OES Law Deputy Chief deployed to the Incident Command Center and demobilized the same day.</li> <li>• The Cal OES Law Branch LEOC was opened and a Cal OES Law Assistant Chief was in position at the LEOC. The LEOC deactivated at 1815 the same day.</li> <li>• A Cal OES Southern Region Senior Emergency Services Coordinator (SESC) deployed to the San Bernardino County EOC as an Agency Representative.</li> </ul>			