

Ojai Community Disaster Guide



Working together to prepare, respond, and stay informed during an emergency



City of Ojai

Disaster Resource Guide for the Ojai Community

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This guide is produced by the City of Ojai in cooperation with its public safety partners to help keep our community informed, engaged, and prepared for disaster.

If you would like copies of this guide or have questions about local disaster preparedness, please contact us by emailing staysafe@ojai.ca.gov, or call (805) 646-5581.

Thank you to the Ojai City Council, the Disaster Council and our local and regional public safety partners for their roles in creating this guide and helping to keep the Ojai community prepared and safe.



To view the latest version of this guide as an e-book, please scan the code above or visit ojai.ca.gov/staysafeguide

Introduction

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The City of Ojai is vulnerable to a range of hazards that may affect residents, businesses and visitors. Surrounded by mountains with limited access in and out, the region has experienced major flooding, landslides, earthquakes and fires. History tells us that events like these are likely to occur again. Individual preparedness will help to ensure that we are ready to face disaster; community collaboration and communications will help us navigate a crisis.

The 2017 Thomas Fire, which caused significant damage throughout Ventura County and involved partial evacuation of the City, demonstrated the importance of providing the public with clear and accessible disaster information at a local level. This guide offers a brief overview of how to prepare for, and what to do during a major disaster. It connects you with local and County resources, and is available online and in print.

While this booklet focuses on Ojai, it reflects the collaboration of local, County, and State partner agencies. In preparing this document, the City coordinated with Ventura County Sheriff's Department (VCSD), the Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD), District 1 County Supervisor's office, local media, schools, businesses and healthcare, and a number of Ojai Valley stakeholders. We will continue to partner as we update and distribute this important part of Ojai's disaster toolkit.



Our goals are for all of us to be prepared before disaster strikes, to link residents, businesses and visitors to accessible emergency communications resources, and – if evacuation is needed – to ensure a safe and effective process.

Ojai City Manager James Vega

Prepare to be self-sufficient the first 72 hours of a major emergency while public safety address the most critical issues.

How Ojai and Ventura County Coordinate During a Disaster

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Preparation

When severe weather is expected or fire danger is high, the City and the Ventura Office of Emergency Services work together to determine potential impact and inform the local and regional community. The City of Ojai maintains close communication with its local and regional partners and may reach out to residents, visitors and businesses through social media, radio and web platforms with information and safety reminders to help ensure that the community takes necessary precautions.

Initial Phase of an Incident

Should a major earthquake, flooding, fire, landslides or other emergency impact the Ojai Valley, a representative from the lead public safety agency (generally Ventura County Fire or Ventura County Sheriff) will contact the Ojai City Manager and launch a coordinated response. Simultaneously, the City will activate its Emergency Operations Center. Run by City and public safety leadership, the EOC acts as the hub for local integrated emergency communications and coordination. In addition to coordinating with the County, the EOC may work with Caltrans, CHP, utility companies, hospitals, the Humane Society, the school district, local media, Ham radio operators, or any other partner agency that is responding or relevant to the incident.

Ongoing Coordination

As a situation progresses, the County's incident management team will update the City's Emergency Operations Center leadership regularly and the City will provide VC OES and other partners with the latest local information. vcemergency.com will continue to post regular updates. Through its outreach channels and working with local media, the City of Ojai will amplify VC OES messaging and share local emergency and incident information with the larger community.



City and County Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) work closely to ensure consistent messaging and a coordinated response.

Where to Get Trusted Disaster Information

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vcemergency.com and vcAlert

During an emergency, the County of Ventura will post maps and periodic updates in English and Spanish on its incident website: vcemergency.com. The City of Ojai will share relevant County information along with local content on its communications channels and will provide updates to Ojai media outlets.

City of Ojai Communication Platforms

- **AM Radio 1610** (City of Ojai station)
This is a local station and requires a good-quality radio.
- **MyOjai Mobile App** (make sure to enable alerts)
Download from Google Play or the App Store.
- **City Social Media**
[Twitter.com/cityofojai](https://twitter.com/cityofojai) | [Facebook.com/cityofojai](https://facebook.com/cityofojai)
- **Nextdoor.com**
City and public safety may send neighborhood-specific updates.
Sign up at [Nextdoor.com](https://nextdoor.com)
- **City of Ojai Website**
ojai.ca.gov will post alerts on its homepage
- **City of Ojai TV**
Spectrum Cable Channel 10
- **Portable e-message Trailers**
City and County may place at key traffic sites

Prepare now so you're informed in an emergency

Bookmark vcemergency.com and ojai.ca.gov

Download mobile apps (vcAlert and myOjai)

Follow the City of Ojai on [Facebook](https://facebook.com/cityofojai) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/cityofojai)

Sign up for [Nextdoor.com](https://nextdoor.com)

Get a radio with batteries and make sure it can receive AM 1610

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Misinformation can be dangerous during an emergency. Always rely on trusted communication sources.

When Power Is Out

A loss of power is a real possibility during an emergency. Make sure that your emergency kit includes battery operated or crank flashlights and a radio, plus battery back-ups for your mobile phones. You may want to consider a small solar generator. Place your emergency kit where you can locate it in the dark.

If a power outage does occur, the City will continue with web and radio outreach, and may add some or all of the following tools to communicate with the community.

- Phone hotline
- Portable Message Trailers
- eLoudspeakers in vehicles
- Ham radio collaboration
- Neighborhood liaisons
- Printed materials on sandwich boards at:
 - Shelter sites
 - Vons Grocery Store
 - Westridge Markets
 - Outside City Hall



Protective Actions: Keeping Yourself and Family Safe

Sheltering in place and evacuation are official protective actions used to keep you safe during a disaster. Please pay attention to the directions of Police and Fire and be ready to shelter in place, prepare to leave, or evacuate immediately if ordered. Public safety will coordinate to move people to safety and minimize other traffic that may slow down the process.

How to Know When It's Time to Go

Those with large animals, elderly family members or individuals with disabilities may want to leave the area prior to any official notifications. When doing so, make sure to check vcemergency.com and ojai.ca.gov for traffic conditions, road closures or potentially unsafe routes before hitting the road.

If sheltering-in-place or evacuation is ordered, the County or lead public safety agency will make the call. The County Sheriff and Fire departments use the County's disaster notification system, which may include phone calls, text messages, loudspeakers and door-to-door visits to alert residents, visitors and businesses in evacuation zones. The Ventura County Sheriff's Office has equipped all of its patrol vehicles with "Hi-Lo" sirens, a European-style alert that is used only to announce emergency evacuation orders. Local evacuation routes and shelter information will be posted on vcemergency.com and all City communications platforms noted in this guide.

[Listen to the Hi-Lo Evacuation Siren](#)



Shelter in Place:

Go indoors. Shut and lock doors and windows. Prepare to self-sustain until further notice or contacted by emergency personnel for direction.

Evacuation Warning:

Potential threat to life and/or property. Those who require additional time to evacuate and those with pets and livestock should leave now.

Evacuation Order:

Immediate threat to life. This is a mandatory order requiring you to leave immediately. The area is legally closed to public access.

Traffic Control During an Evacuation

Road Closures to Manage Traffic

Upon official notice of an evacuation, Ventura County Sheriff or Fire may request road closures *into* the City of Ojai to reduce traffic congestion and allow more traffic to leave the area. Potential inbound closures may include:

1. Highway 33 northbound from the Ventura area
2. Highway 33 southbound from the Los Padres National Forest
3. Highway 150 westbound from the Santa Paula area
4. Highway 150 eastbound from the Santa Barbara area

Evacuation Routes

There are four main evacuation routes out of the City of Ojai:

1. Southbound Highway 33 towards Ventura
2. Northbound Highway 33 towards the Los Padres National Forest
3. Eastbound Highway 150 towards Santa Paula
4. Westbound Highway 150 towards Santa Barbara

The Ventura County Sheriff will determine which evacuation routes to use based on incident locations, weather and road conditions. This information will be broadcast through the public safety disaster notification system and noted on City communications platforms.

Get to know your neighbors

Do you have elderly or vulnerable individuals living in your neighborhood?

Do you have neighbors without their own transportation?

Do you belong to an HOA or neighborhood watch group?

Take time now to discuss how you can work together to prepare your neighborhood for an emergency.

Tips at [readyventuracounty.org](https://www.readyventuracounty.org)

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Where to Go When You Have to Leave

Ventura County OES and its partner agencies work together to operate shelters throughout the county during an emergency.

County Operated Temporary Evacuation Points/Shelters

The County of Ventura describes Temporary Evacuation Points (TEPs) as a *gathering place for those needing to leave their homes during a disaster*. The County TEPs will provide water, food and restrooms, a quick assessment, and if needed, shelter. Nordhoff High School is a likely TEP/Shelter site in the Ojai Valley.

City Operated Temporary Refuge Area

Ojai is unique with its limited ingress and egress and its many large animal-owners with horse trailers. To provide a place to get off the road or out of traffic for a few minutes or a few hours, the City has designated the Soule Park Golf Course parking lot as a Temporary Refuge Area. This is a short-term option for vehicles and trailers and will be available during major emergencies when golfing and dining services are closed.

The County and City will tell you where to go in an evacuation. *If you are not sure*. Check [ojai.ca.gov](https://www.ojai.ca.gov) and [vcemergency.com](https://www.vcemergency.com) to verify current shelter locations and safe routes, as they may change depending on the incident location.

Nordhoff High School is the likely site for the area's primary TEP/Shelter. The County and the Red Cross also have access to other potential shelter sites in the Ojai Valley, which may be activated depending on incident locations and local needs.

Sheltering? Don't Forget to Bring:

- ✓ Medications
- ✓ Identification
- ✓ Infant/Child Items
- ✓ Mobile Phone & Charger
- ✓ Sleeping Items

Keeping Yourself and Family Safe

Children in Schools

With 2,300 public school students at eight Ojai Unified School District sites and nearly a dozen private schools in the Ojai Valley, a large number of children may be on campus when disaster strikes. All Ojai Valley schools have a disaster plan in place. It is essential that parents understand the emergency procedures for their children's schools and check-in regularly to ensure that emergency contact information is up to date. The Ojai Unified School District will use Parent Square to contact parents during an emergency and inform parents how to safely reconnect with their children. Take some time while developing your disaster kit to update school information and talk to your children about what will happen if an emergency occurs when they are at school.

Healthcare Resources

Ojai is unique and fortunate as a small rural-suburban community with its own high-quality, acute-care hospital. Ojai Valley Community Hospital, part of Community Memorial Health System, is a 100-bed facility providing inpatient and outpatient care, skilled nursing services, and a 24-hour standby emergency room. Through coordination with its emergency response network, the hospital is prepared to address a variety of disasters while continuing to provide patient care and a safe environment for its patients to shelter in place. While it may adjust routine services, the hospital and its emergency department will remain as open as possible during a major emergency. The community can help make the most of this valuable resource by being personally prepared with basic first aid knowledge and supplies, and allowing the hospital to focus on critical needs during a disaster.



Caring for Animals in an Emergency

Animal evacuations are a major concern for the Ojai Valley, with its large population of domestic animals and livestock. While shelter sites may take a limited number of small animals, large animals may present a challenge. Fortunately, Ojai is home to the Humane Society's 4.5-acre site serving the entire county and providing a valuable local resource for animal owners during a disaster.

During the Thomas Fire, the Humane Society housed more than 400 horses and other livestock, many rescued from evacuated areas, some running wild and scared. They encourage residents to prepare and take early action, especially with pets and livestock. This means having a way to transport horses or large animals to an animal shelter site, making sure animals are micro-chipped and have tags, and practicing animal evacuation. Those with large animals should leave at the warning stage or earlier and not wait for a full evacuation order.



Animal Evacuation Tips

- Ensure access to a horse-trailer, crate or appropriate method of transport. Consider sharing a trailer with other horse-owners if you do not have your own.
- Microchip and tag all pets and horses, and make sure your contact information is up to date.
- Keep a picture of your animals with you when you evacuate to streamline reunification.
- Pre-pack pet *go bags* for your animals that include special food, medicine and a travel crate.
- Evacuate at the Warning level and bring large animals to the Ojai Humane Society at 402 Bryant Street. Do not wait for an evacuation order. You will need identification to drop off and pick up animals.
- Tune in to local emergency channels for information on shelter spaces and locations.
- Visit the Humane Society website at hsvc.org to get more emergency tips for animal owners.

Preparation is key in case of emergency and we hope this guide is a valuable addition to your emergency toolkit. Please take time today to download the MyOjai and vcAlert apps and enable emergency notifications. Familiarize yourself with local communication platforms, and prepare an emergency kit. Together we can help ensure that Ojai is informed and ready for the unexpected.

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Prepare your Emergency Kit

To assemble your kit store items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as plastic bins or a duffel bag. We also recommend that you keep a vehicle half-full or charged at all times. Visit readyventuracounty.org for more emergency preparedness tips and tools.

Suggested Emergency Kit Supplies

- Water (one gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation)
- Food (at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food) prescription medications and infant supplies
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio that receives AM 1610
- Flashlight with extra batteries or a hand-crank flashlight
- First aid kit
- Extra batteries
- Whistle (to signal for help)
- Dust mask (to help filter contaminated air) and plastic sheeting and duct tape (to shelter in place)
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties (for personal sanitation)
- Wrench or pliers (to turn off utilities)
- Can opener (for food)
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery
- Pet food, medicine and supplies for three days

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Special Thanks to Our Public Safety Partners

American Red Cross

City of Ojai Disaster Council

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Humane Society of Ventura County

Ojai Unified School District

Ojai Valley Amateur Radio Club

Ojai Valley Community Hospital

Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council

Ojai Valley News

Ventura County Auxiliary Communications Service (Ham Radio)

Ventura County Fire Department

Ventura County Office of Emergency Services

Ventura County Sheriff

Ventura County Supervisor for District 1, Matt LaVere



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