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Effort to Strengthen Ties Between California First Responders, Cultural Heritage Community Launched at Getty Center

LOS ANGELES -- First responders, emergency managers and members of the cultural heritage community gathered at the Getty Center today to help spare priceless art, historic artifacts and records, and monuments from damage or loss during future emergencies.

Tuesday's day-long forum, dubbed "California Alliance for Response", was the first in a series of four sponsored by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), the California State Library's California Conservation Program, the Heritage Emergency National Task Force, the Cultural Property Protection Group and host institutions. Additional forums are scheduled September 21 at The Prado at Balboa Park in San Diego on September 21, September 25 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and September 27 at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento.

Each locally developed forum features presentations on the importance of protecting and preserving cultural and historic treasures, a facilitated panel discussion based on an earthquake, fire or other event that could impact a museum, historic facility or other landmark and discussion of such important issues as the inclusion of cultural and historic resources in local emergency plans, the development of cultural heritage response and recovery teams and mutual aid within the cultural heritage community.

“Unfortunately, the monuments, pieces of art, artifacts and historic records that provide us with a link to our history and culture as Americans and Californians are not immune to damage in emergencies,” said OES Director Henry Renteria.

“If first responders and emergency managers don’t know or understand the special handling required to protect and preserve these precious artifacts, or if members of the cultural heritage community are unfamiliar with California’s emergency management system and protocols for accessing first responders, they could be lost forever,” said Lawrence L. Reger, president of Heritage Preservation.

“Fortunately, effective preparedness measures and training taken by members of the cultural heritage community, and solid relationships between the two communities that are built during these forums can reduce to risk of damage to these priceless treasures,” said Renteria.

The series of forums has been launched by OES as part of National Preparedness Month and are being conducted as part of the agency’s increasing coordination effort for disaster preparedness between the public and private sector, called for in last years SB 546 and recently in Executive Order S-04-06, signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in April.

Additional information about the forums is available by calling (916) 845-8275.

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