

Santa Barbara County Fire Department Goes to Sea

Hart Prioritizes \$750,000 in State Funding to Purchase Marine Rescue Boat

By Jay Inman
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“The *Conception* dive-boat disaster and numerous environmental emergencies have underscored the importance of enhancing emergency response capabilities along our coastline,” said Assemblymember Gregg Hart, who championed \$750,000 for a marine rescue boat for County Fire with the support of State Senator Monique Limón.



Assemblymember Gregg Hart | Credit: Courtesy

During an email exchange on Tuesday, Hart added, “This marine rescue boat will enhance the lifesaving and disaster response capabilities of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department.”

“People sometimes don’t realize that the Channel Islands are all part of Santa Barbara County Fire’s jurisdiction,” said Captain Scott Safechuck, public information officer for the department. This includes more than 110 miles of coastline. Ocean conditions can be treacherous, especially at the Channel Islands, and “having a boat that is capable of getting to these places is crucial to ensuring the safety of the community,” he said.

“We are also one of few county fire departments that is response for oil spill mitigation,” Safechuck said. This includes spills both in the ocean and on land. As the line of first response, the addition of this resource to the county’s current marine

oil-spill response plan – which includes four watercraft and two inflatable rescue boats – will enhance the department’s ability to contain a crude oil spill until more resources arrive from agencies like the Coast Guard.

County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig stated, “The Santa Barbara County Fire Department is dedicated to marine rescue, firefighting, paramedic care, and oil spill response,” and that “all residents and visitors will receive the timely and reliable services they expect from the Santa Barbara County Fire Department.”

“I am grateful for Assemblymember Hart’s leadership and proud to support this request,” said Senator Limón of the funding from the state budget. A formal check presentation takes place on Tuesday, November 28, at Goleta Beach County Park. On hand will be a rendering of a potential rescue boat. Safechuck said the department hadn’t yet chosen a boat design, as they “want to be diligent in the process of getting the right one.”

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