



NEWS RELEASE

Laotian Organizing Project
Contra Costa County Supervisor **JOHN GIOIA** (joy-a)
Contra Costa County Sheriff **WARREN RUPF**
Contra Costa Health Services **WILLIAM B. WALKER, MD**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2005

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LAUNCHES NATION'S FIRST MULT-LINGUAL EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

LOCATION:	431 - 30 th Street, Richmond, Ca. 94804
DATE:	December 12, 2005
TIME:	12:00 noon

RICHMOND, Calif., The Laotian Organizing Project (LOP), Supervisor John Gioia, the Contra Costa Sheriff's Office, and Contra Costa Health Services are announcing a joint news conference to unveil the County's new multi-lingual emergency notification system.

The need to have the system, the first one of its kind in the nation, was heightened after an accidental chemical release at an oil refinery in Richmond in March 1999. The County's then English-only telephone system notified nearby residents to stay inside and shelter-in-place. However, members of the Southeast Asian community, who speak four major languages - Lao, Mien, Khmu, and Hmong were alarmed because they didn't understand the instructions.

With the help of the Laotian Organizing Project of Asian Pacific Environmental Network, the Laotian community began advocating for a phone system that had multi-lingual capabilities. Supervisor John Gioia, whose district includes one of the largest Southeast Asian communities in the Bay Area, led the effort to obtain County and other resources to add multilingual compatibilities to the existing Telephone Emergency Notification System. A \$140,000 grant from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the California Air Resources Board allowed the County and the community to begin work to build an effective telephone system that residents in non-English speaking communities could understand.

The Office of the Sheriff, which manages the Community Warning System, identified a Caller ID box that can be programmed in different languages; however, residents will need to have a Caller ID subscription.

To demonstrate the device, immediately following the news conference, Thongsoun Phuthama will have a Caller ID box installed at his home. Phuthama was one of the first community residents who advocated for a Southeast Asian language notification system.

Southeast Asians who would like to have a device installed may call Contra Costa Health Services representatives Yien Saechao at (510) 708-9269 or E. Hiew Lee at (510) 685-0230.

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