

ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY***NEWS RELEASE***

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OCFA To Request “Safe-Surrender Site” Status for its Fire Stations

The Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) Board of Directors took the first step at its January 27 meeting to designate its 60 fire stations as “Safe-Surrender Sites” by adopting a resolution to the Orange County Board of Supervisors requesting this status.

The State of California’s “Safe Haven Law” took effect on January 1, 2001 to provide a “safe haven” for babies who would otherwise be abandoned in trash cans, restrooms, roadsides, etc. The law encourages persons with custody of unwanted newborn children to anonymously surrender the newborn child at a “Safe-Surrender Site” so that it may receive immediate medical attention.

Under the law, California Health and Safety Code Section 1255.7, the person surrendering the child is immune from criminal prosecution and may provide medical information to the person accepting custody. The law also stipulates that the County Board of Supervisors is responsible for designating “Safe-Surrender Sites” within its jurisdiction.

Los Angeles County, and others, have already designated neighborhood fire stations within their communities as “Safe-Surrender Sites.” “Media announcements originating in the Los Angeles media market tend to misinform listeners in Orange County,” said OCFA Board Chairman Ken Blake. “It is important that we have a consistent policy across county lines, to provide safe options to the mothers and their babies in these difficult situations. That is why we are requesting that the Orange County Board of Supervisors designate OCFA stations as “Safe-Surrender Sites.”

Over the next several weeks the 12 city-operated fire departments in Orange County are expected to ask their respective city councils to consider a similar request to the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

The Orange County Fire Authority is a joint powers authority that serves as the all-risk emergency response agency for 1.3 million Orange County residents in 22 cities and the unincorporated areas of the county.