

NEWS

Jan. 14, 2022

For Immediate Release

Statement From County Manager Mike Callagy Regarding Safety Equipment at the Event Center

Redwood City — Surplus safety equipment and cleaning supplies purchased in response to COVID-19 were moved outside at the San Mateo Event Center last fall to accommodate an event and sustained damage during the significant storms earlier this season. The County is solely responsible for our materials at the Event Center. We deeply regret that this occurred and are hiring an external investigator to identify all facts related to the damage and make recommendations to avoid future incidents. While the County will provide more information as it becomes available, we want to share what we do know now.

- The County purchased the supplies early in the pandemic when no one knew how long global supply shortages would last and jurisdictions nationwide were competing to purchase safety equipment, even non-medical grade items, to protect first responders and communities.
- As the global supply of hospital-grade equipment and the demands of the pandemic response locally evolved, the need among local hospitals and providers for these supplies, particularly those not rated for hospital use, subsided.
- The estimated value of the supplies based on the original purchase prices is \$7 million.
- The surplus supplies include primarily non-medical-grade isolation gowns, face shields and goggles as well as a number of sterile gowns. There are also miscellaneous cleaning supplies like bleach and mop buckets and handles.
- The County's supply of masks, such as N95 and KN95 respirators, and gloves are stored indoors, separate from the impacted supplies at the Event Center.
- For months prior to the supplies being moved outdoors, the County worked with the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) to offer these surplus supplies free of charge to health care providers and other agencies, including schools, and other states, but few accepted the offer because sizes, quantities, other considerations made them less appropriate.

- The surplus materials were moved from a building at the Event Center in mid-September to an outside fenced area to accommodate other needs for the space but should have been returned inside once the event was over. Storage space was not available at other County facilities.
- While the storms damaged some outside packaging, most of the supplies are individually wrapped. The County is actively inspecting and cleaning the materials with plans to donate undamaged goods to a nonprofit.
- The County maintains separate warehouse facilities to store high-grade personal protective equipment, including masks and other sensitive items, in a climate-controlled environment and regularly supplies local health care partners during shortages and emergencies.
- We want to assure our community that this incident did not impact the County's ability to provide safety equipment to first responders and others responding to COVID-19.

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