



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

May 2, 2008

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## **GIVING ALL NEWBORNS A CHANCE AT LIFE** *County of San Diego Expands Safely Surrendered Baby Sites to Most County Fire Stations*

Baby found dead in dumpster. Hours-old baby given to stranger at gas station. Dead newborn abandoned in shopping center restroom. Tragic headlines like these are avoidable thanks to California's Safely Surrendered Baby Law.

Since 2001, County of San Diego hospitals have been designated as Safe Surrender sites and today, nearly 200 County fire stations also share that designation.

"Our community's fire districts have come together with the County of San Diego to open their doors as safe places for distressed parents to safely drop off their newborns," said District Two Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Vice-Chairwoman of the Board of Supervisors. "We are a community that cares about our children and this further demonstrates that commitment. Thanks to the expansion of the Safely Surrender program, all newborns will have the opportunity for a safe and healthy start in life

Most 24-hour fire stations in San Diego County will be available to accept an infant within 72 hours of its birth with no questions asked of the parent dropping off the baby. All participating stations display the Safe Surrender sign on the outside of the fire station. Stations that are not staffed 24 hours will have a different sign, directing people to call (858) 694-5700 to find the nearest Safely Surrender site.

"We felt it was important for fire stations to participate in this program since there are stations in nearly every community in the County," said La Mesa Fire Chief Dave Burk, President of the San Diego County Fire Chief's Association. "San Diego County fire fighters have all undergone training on what to do when a baby is surrendered."



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San Diego County has seen four safely surrendered newborns since the program was implemented in 2001. Statewide, more than 220 babies have been saved.

“In an ideal situation we wouldn’t need a program like this,” said Mary Harris, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Director of Child Welfare Services. “But a program that saves even one child is an important mission that helps fulfill our agency’s goal of protecting our youth and working for safe, healthy and thriving communities.”

