

Sacramento Region Unprepared for Big Flood, Support for Governor's Flood Control Efforts Increased

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In his January State of the State speech, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed a strategic growth plan for California with \$222.6 billion for schools, transportation, flood control, and other public projects. This includes spending \$35 billion for flood control and water supply in the next 10 years. To achieve this goal, he planned to put a \$3 billion bond measure for flood protection on the ballot this year, hopefully in the June election.

If levees break in a big storm, many areas in the Sacramento region may become submerged under deep water. On February 24 after inspecting levees in the region and the Central Valley with federal and local officials, Governor Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency for the levees in the Central Valley. While these levees are intended to protect the Sacramento region, many pose the risk for a Katrina like disaster. What do the residents in the Sacramento region think about Governor Schwarzenegger's flood control efforts? Are the people in the region ready for a big storm?

According to *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*, people in the Sacramento region are not prepared for a big flood. Many (10%) are unaware whether they live in flood-prone areas or not. Half of the families (50%) have no evacuation plan in case of an emergency such as a big flood, and few (19%) currently carry flood insurance. While seventeen percent of the residents know their homes are located in flood-prone areas, nearly half of them (47%) have no emergency evacuation plan, and one-third (34%) carry no flood insurance. Moreover, a majority of the residents (76%) who don't know whether their homes are located in the flood plains also have no flood insurance.

Since the Governor declared the state emergency for the levees in the Central Valley on Feb. 24, people have become much more aware of the flood risk in the region. Before the declaration, only 38 percent of the residents in the region thought of flood control as a big problem. Since Feb. 24, a majority (54%) regards flood protection as a big concern in the region. What's more, the approval rating for the Governor's flood control efforts has increased. More than half of the residents (53%) approve of how he deals with flood protection after Feb. 24, while only 37 percent thought so before Feb. 24. Since Feb. 24, they also tend to vote yes more often on a \$3 billion bond measure for flood control projects in California (53% yes after vs. 48% yes before).

These are some of the results from *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*, conducted from February 4th to March 5th, 2006, by the Institute for Social Research (ISR), California State University, Sacramento.

Many residents unaware of flood risks for their homes

Although seventy-three percent of the residents indicate that their homes are not located in flood plains, 17 percent know for sure they live in flood-prone areas. However, 10 percent of the households in the region don't know whether their homes are located in flood areas or not.

County of residency significantly affects the awareness of potential homes at risk of flooding. Residents in Sacramento and Yolo counties are more likely to live in flood areas. They are also more uncertain whether they live in flood-prone areas or not. Non-white residents and those who are 40 or younger are also more likely to live in flood areas or don't know whether their homes are at risk for flood. Non-home owners, those who moved into the region in the past 6 years, and those with household income less than \$30,000 are much less likely to know whether their homes are located in the flood plains or not.

Such unawareness poses a great risk for the region. Compared to those who know for sure that they live in flood areas, those who are unaware of their flood risk are much less likely to have an evacuation plan (52% vs. 41%), carry flood insurance (62% vs. 13%), and vote yes on the Governor's bond measure for flood control projects (60% vs. 42%).

“Is your home in a flood plain? If you don't know, it is very important for you to indicate this.”

Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region

	Sacramento Region	Sacramento County	Yolo County	Placer County	El Dorado County
Yes	17%	22%	17%	4%	3%
No	73	67	63	91	94
Don't know	10	11	20	5	3

Comparison between White and Other Racial Groups

	White	Other Racial Groups
Yes	14%	24%
No	77	64
Don't know	9	12

Comparison among People with Different Age Groups

	40 or Younger	41 to 64	65 or Plus
Yes	20%	16%	14%
No	65	77	78
Don't know	15	7	8

Comparison between Homeowners and Others

	Homeowners	Others
Yes	17%	18%
No	77	60
Don't know	6	22

Comparison among People with Different Length of Residence in the Region

	6 Years or Less	7 to 19 Years	20 Years or Longer
Yes	17%	16%	17%
No	67	72	76
Don't know	16	12	7

Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes

	Less than \$30,000	\$30,000 - Less than 75,000	\$75,000 Or More
Yes	18%	16%	17%
No	67	74	76
Don't know	15	10	7

“Does your family have an evacuation plan in case of an emergency such as flood or earthquake in the Sacramento region?”

Comparison among People Living in Different Areas

	Sacramento Region	Live in Flood Areas	Not Live in Flood Areas	Don't Know
Yes	49%	52%	49%	41%
No	50	47	50	54
Don't know	1	1	1	5

“Do you currently have flood insurance?”

Comparison among People Living in Different Areas

	Sacramento Region	Live in Flood Areas	Not Live in Flood Areas	Don't Know
Yes	19%	62%	10%	13%
No	77	34	87	76
Don't know	4	4	3	11

“If an election were held today, would you vote yes, no, or don’t know on a \$3 billion bond measure for flood control projects in California?”

Comparison among People Living in Different Areas

	Live in Flood Areas	Not Live in Flood Areas	Don’t Know
Yes	60%	48%	42%
No	12	22	19
Don’t know	28	30	39

Half have no evacuation plan, and even fewer carry flood insurance

If a major disaster occurs in the Sacramento region, only 49 percent of the families have an evacuation plan. Fifty percent don’t have one, and one percent don’t know. Household income and gender don’t have any significant impact on this issue. Compared to white residents (48%) and homeowners (48%), other racial groups (55%) and non-homeowners (54%) are less likely to have an evacuation plan for their families in case of major flooding. Furthermore, almost half (47%) of those who know their homes are located in the flood plains don’t have any emergency evacuation plan.

An overwhelming majority of the people in the Sacramento region (77%) have no flood insurance. In fact, more than 80 percent of the residents in Yolo (81%), El Dorado (87%), and Placer (91%) counties, non-homeowners (87%), and households with income less than \$30,000 (86%) do not have any flood insurance for their families. Moreover, one-third (34%) of the residents living in flood areas and a majority of the residents (76%) who have no idea whether their homes have flood risks also carry no flood insurance.

“Does your family have an evacuation plan in case of an emergency such as flood or earthquake in the Sacramento region?”

Comparison between White and Other Racial Groups

	Sacramento Region	White	Other Racial Groups
Yes	49%	51%	43%
No	50	48	55
Don’t know	1	1	2

Comparison between Homeowners and Others

	Homeowners	Others
Yes	51%	43%
No	48	54
Don’t know	1	3

Comparison among People Living in Different Areas

	Live in Flood Areas	Not Live in Flood Areas	Don't Know
Yes	52%	49%	41%
No	47	50	54
Don't know	1	1	5

“Do you currently have flood insurance?”

Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region

	Sacramento Region	Sacramento County	Yolo County	Placer County	El Dorado County
Yes	19%	25%	16%	5%	8%
No	77	71	81	91	87
Don't know	4	4	3	4	5

Comparison between Homeowners and Others

	Homeowners	Others
Yes	23%	7%
No	74	87
Don't know	3	6

Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes

	Less than \$30,000	\$30,000 - Less than 75,000	\$75,000 Or More
Yes	9%	18%	24%
No	86	80	74
Don't know	5	2	2

Comparison among People Living in Different Areas

	Live in Flood Areas	Not Live in Flood Areas	Don't Know
Yes	62%	10%	13%
No	34	87	76
Don't know	4	3	11

Region's awareness of flood risk improves after declaration of state emergency for the levees

On February 22, Governor Schwarzenegger inspected the levees in Sacramento and the Central Valley with federal and local officials. They found out that many levees in California are in need of repairs. On Feb. 24, Governor Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency for these levees so he could obtain more funding from the state and federal governments to speed up the repair work. This is because many of these levees are supposed to protect the Sacramento region, but may pose the risk for a Katrina like disaster.

Public awareness of the flood risk in the region has increased after the Governor declared a state emergency for the levees in the Central Valley. Before Feb. 24, a majority of the people in the region were not too concerned about flood control. Only 38 percent thought flood control is a big problem. Thirty-seven percent regarded it as somewhat a problem, 20 percent believed it is not a problem, and 5 percent didn't know. This perception has changed since Feb. 24. A majority of the residents (54%) are very concerned about flood control and think it is a big problem. Thirty-two percent regard it as somewhat a problem. Only 11 percent believe it is not a problem, and three percent don't know.

In the Sacramento region, how seriously people perceive flood control affects their actions regarding flood protection. Compared to those who don't think flood protection is a big problem, those who are very concerned about this issue are more likely to buy flood insurance (18% vs. 22%) and vote yes on the Governor's proposed bond measure for flood control (40% vs. 63%).

“Next, I am going to read you a list of issues in the Sacramento region. For each one, please tell me whether you think it is a big problem, somewhat a problem, or not a problem. Flood control?”

Comparison before and after the Governor's Declaration of the State Emergency

	Before Declaration (Before Feb. 24)	After Declaration (After Feb. 24)
A big problem	38%	54%
Somewhat a problem	37	32
Not a problem	20	11
Don't know	5	3

“Do you currently have flood insurance?”

Comparison among People with Difference Perceptions of Flood Control

	A Big Problem	Not A Big Problem
Yes	22%	18%
No	76	77
Don't know	2	5

“If an election were held today, would you vote yes, no, or don't know on a \$3 billion bond measure for flood control projects in California?”

Comparison among People with Difference Perceptions of Flood Control

	A Big Problem	Not A Big Problem
Yes	63%	40%
No	12	25
Don't know	25	35

Support for the Governor's flood protection efforts increased

The Governor declared a state emergency for the levees in the Central Valley on Feb. 24. Since then, the approval rating for how he is dealing with flood control has increased. Before Feb. 24, 37 percent approve the way he is dealing with flood control, 36 percent hold the opposite view, and 27 percent don't know how he is doing with this important issue. Since Feb. 24, a majority of the residents (53%) approve of what he is doing to protect California from flood, and only 15 percent have no idea about his performance in this area.

“Now I am going to read you a list of issues Governor Schwarzenegger has to deal with. Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the way he is handling each one. Flood control?”

Comparison before and after the Governor's Declaration of the State Emergency

	Before Declaration (Before Feb. 24)	After Declaration (After Feb. 24)
Approve	37%	53%
Disapprove	36	32
Don't know	27	15

Almost half support the Governor’s bond measure, while one-third don’t know

Nearly half (49%) of the residents in the Sacramento region would endorse the Governor’s \$3 billion bond measure for flood control projects in California, 20 percent vote no, and about one-third (31%) don’t know. Residents in the Sacramento region don’t seem to have a strong support for this bond measure, because a large percentage of the residents (31%) don’t quite understand or have not formed an opinion on this bond. Therefore people need to be better informed about this bond measure if the Governor wants to get a much stronger support for it in the coming elections.

Support for this flood bond varies significantly by county, income, and age. Residents in Sacramento and Yolo counties (52%) are much more likely to vote yes than the public from Placer and El Dorado counties (41%). Households making \$50,000 or more (53%) and those who are more than 40 (52%) are much more likely to favor this bond measure than those with household income less than \$50,000 (46%) and those who are 40 or younger (45%).

Democrats (52%) tend to vote yes more than Republicans (49%) and other voters (47%). Republicans (25%) are the most likely to oppose this measure, while other voters (34%) are the most likely to indicate they don’t understand or have yet to form an opinion. Since Feb. 24, people tend to support this measure more (53% after vs. 48% before), but this increase is not big enough to be statistically significant. Therefore the Governor still needs to work hard to convince the public that this bond is good for California if he wants to get stronger support for this measure.

“If an election were held today, would you vote yes, no, or don’t know on a \$3 billion bond measure for flood control projects in California?”

Comparison among the Four Counties in the Sacramento Region

	Sacramento Region	Sacramento /Yolo	Placer /El Dorado
Yes	49%	52%	41%
No	20	18	26
Don’t know	31	30	33

Comparison among People with Different Household Incomes

	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 or more
Yes	46%	53%
No	18	22
Don’t know	36	25

Comparison among People with Different Age Groups

	40 or Younger	More than 40
Yes	45%	52%
No	15	23
Don't know	40	25

Comparison among Registered Voters

	Democrats	Republicans	Other Voters
Yes	52%	49%	47%
No	19	25	19
Don't know	29	26	34

Comparison before and after the Governor's Declaration of the State Emergency

	Before Declaration (Before Feb. 24)	After Declaration (After Feb. 24)
Yes	48%	53%
No	21	17
Don't know	31	30

Survey Methods

The above results are based on our fifth annual survey, *The 2006 Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region*¹. This study is a computer-assisted telephone interview of 1122 adult residents age 18 and older from randomly selected households in the Sacramento region, which includes Sacramento, Yolo, Placer, and El Dorado counties. The objective of this project is to assess quality of life and public opinion regarding a wide range of important local and national issues in the Sacramento region.

More than 30 students conducted phone interviews in English and Spanish from February 4 to March 5, 2006, at the Institute for Social Research, California State University, Sacramento. The sample is representative of the four counties in the Sacramento region and comparable to the 2000 U.S. Census (68% residents in the Census vs. 65.4% in the sample in Sacramento County, 14% in the Census vs. 16.3% in the sample in Placer County, 9% in the Census vs. 8.2% in the sample in Yolo County; and 9% in the Census vs. 10.1% in the sample in El Dorado County). The margin of error for the survey is approximately ± 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The error for group comparisons in the Sacramento region would be higher than ± 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

¹ This study was called Annual Survey of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region.

This survey has compared the Sacramento region findings with those from other California regions, the state, and the nation. Data cited regarding the state and other California regions often comes from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Statewide Surveys. Nationwide data often comes from Gallup polls.

The College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies (SSIS), Department of Sociology, the Office of Public Affairs, the Office of Community Collaboration at California State University (CSU), Sacramento, and CSU, Office of Community Service Learning sponsored this project. Dr. Joseph Sheley is actively involved in this project and has made great contributions.

This research is directed by Amy Liu, Ph.D., Department of Sociology and Institute for Social Research, California State University, Sacramento. Dr. Liu is an expert in public opinion polls, and has conducted over 20 surveys in the past nine years, including:

- 2005, 2004, 2003, and 2002 Annual Surveys of Public Opinion and Life Quality in the Sacramento Region
- Survey of Iowa Business about Eldercare and Eldercare Needs
- Story County Conservation Board Survey
- Grundy County Youth Needs Assessment

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Appendix I: The 2006 Annual Survey Research Team Members and Sponsors

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