FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

TIGER GETS A HELPING “HAND” TO GET OUT OF HIS MOAT

San Francisco Fire Department and Zoo Staff Lift 360 pound Tiger

(San Francisco, CA. March 29, 2010) – Tony, an aged Amur tiger, received assistance today to get out of the moat in his outdoor exhibit.

Tony took the keeper steps down into the moat on Thursday afternoon, March 25. “It’s not unusual for Tony to go into the moat…it’s one of his favorite places,” said Mammal Curator Ingrid Russell-White. “The weather was warm and it’s cooler there. He was playing, drinking and eating and he just was not motivated to climb the steps or rocks to return to his exhibit.”

Tony came to the San Francisco Zoo in 1993, and he just turned 18 years old, which is approximately 90 years old in human years. He was diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease in 2007 that was regularly treated with prednisone and other medications to keep it under control. In his most recent annual veterinary review, he was graded with a normal geriatric body score and condition for a tiger his age. He continued to receive his medication through daily “meatballs” dropped into the moat.

“Tony is a big baby,” said Chief Veterinarian Jacqueline Jancek, “and he lets us know when he doesn’t feel well by not eating and becoming listless. We saw
nothing but normal behavior from him, so we waited a few days to see if he would come out on his own."

Too many days had passed and in light of the pending storm, the Zoo decided to follow established procedures to extract him from the moat today. Once anesthetized, Tony, who weights approximately 360 pounds, would have to be lifted on an angle and carried up the keeper stairs. The Zoo called the San Francisco Fire Department (SFPD) and Battalion Chief James Blake came out to assess the situation. Arrangements were finalized.

This morning Battalion Chiefs Blake and Lorrie Kalos and their crew arrived at the Zoo at 8:30 a.m. Tony was anesthetized at 9:30 a.m. Once the medication took hold, he was placed and secured on a board; and, with a combination of people-power and a pulley system supplied by the Fire Department, lifted out.

Zoo Director Tanya Peterson commented, “It was wonderful to have the Fire Department assist us with this procedure. The safety of our visitors, staff and animals are our highest priority, and SFFD willingly stepped in and offered their expertise.”

The entire procedure took two hours and 15 minutes. Once Tony was lifted to the top of his exhibit, he was taken from his outdoor exhibit into his night quarters inside the Lion House where he was thoroughly examined before coming out of his anesthesia.

The Zoo will look at all options to “geriatrify” the outdoor exhibit so that Tony does not have access to the moat in the future. In the meantime he will stay inside the Lion House.

About the San Francisco Zoo
Encompassing 100 acres, the historic San Francisco Zoo is Northern California’s largest zoological park. The Zoo is home to exotic and rescued animals from all over the world and is located across from the Pacific Ocean. The African Savanna offers a multi-species landscape with giraffes, zebras, kudu, ostriches and more. Go nose to nose with famed grizzly sisters Kachina and Kiona at Grizzly Gulch; watch lemurs leap through the largest outdoor lemur habitat in the country; visit Penguin Island; marvel at our troop of gorillas; and feed farm animals in the popular Children’s Zoo. Take rides on one of the world’s only old-fashioned miniature steam trains and the historic Dentzel Carousel. The Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and is located at 1 Zoo Road, San Francisco (415) 753-7080. Visit www.sfzoo.org for more information.