The American Red Cross and Community Response to the 2015 NorCal Wildfires

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Law Enforcement Response to the Valley Fire
Lake County, CA
Sept. 12, 2015

Disaster Planning for California Hospitals

Lake County Sheriff’s Office
Brian Martin – Sheriff-Coroner
Lake County, California

- 1,329 square miles
- Largest freshwater lake in CA
- Poorest county in CA
- Population of +/- 65,000
- 5 fire districts
- 2 police departments (10 officers and 22 officers)
- Lake County Sheriff’s Office — 50 deputies
- 2 hospitals

California’s Ongoing Drought
Statistics:

2015 (State) – 5,741 fires for 306,427 acres
2015 (Federal) – 1,908 fires for 516,761 acres
2015 (combined) – 7,649 fires for 823,188 acres

Date started: Sept. 9, 2015
Acres burned: 70,868
Lives lost: 2
Structures destroyed: 965
- 475 residences
- 343 outbuildings
- 45 structures damaged

Butte Fire Was 7th Most Destructive Wildfire in California History
Valley Fire Was 3rd Most Destructive Wildfire in California History

- Date started: Sept. 12, 2015
- Acres burned: 76,067
- Structures destroyed: 2048
- Lives lost: 4

Pre-Event Situation

- Staffing levels typical for a Saturday – 4 deputies + 1 sergeant
- Approximately 1 month earlier, Rocky Fire burned 69,438 acres and destroyed 96 buildings
- Before Rocky was contained, Jerusalem Fire burned 25,118 acres and destroyed 27 buildings
- Fire Management Assistance Grant awarded for these events
- Hundreds of evacuations
Pre-Event Situation

- 2 community response teams certified in county
- Deputies assigned take-home vehicles
- Media outreach utilized Nixle, email, press releases, website and social media
- OES removed from Sheriff during prior administration; placed with County Administrative Office

Timeline

- 1322 hrs – First call
- 1351 hrs – CAL FIRE requests initial evacuations
- 1403 hrs – First report of person needing help evacuating (120+ more to come)
- 1407 hrs – Off-duty deputies called in
- 1409 hrs – Local DFW officers responding – first of numerous LEMA
- 1455 hrs – First reverse 911 message out
Timeline (cont.)

- **1725 hrs** – Evacuation of Hidden Valley Lake ordered (app. 9 miles from fire origin; just over 4 hours)
- **1758 hrs** – Deputy reports first spot fire in Hidden Valley Lake (4.5 hrs)
- **1812 hrs** – Lines across SR 29 cause split of evacuees to different county

By the end of the fire, approximately 120 square miles had burned driven by 50+ mph wind

Medical Issues

- Smoke inhalation by deputy
- 4 firefighters burned over
- Evacuees without medication
- Special needs/elderly evacuees
- 4 confirmed deaths with 1 more likely
- Identification/Location of remains
After Action Review

What went well
- Coordinated evacuation
- Mass notification
- Coordinated media releases
- LEMA immediate response
- Long-term recovery task force formed
- Request California National Guard Military Police

What to improve
- Add redundant notification systems
- Define roles of emergency operations center and incident command posts
- OES director needs a degree of autonomy
- Donation management plan

Lessons Learned
- Rumor control/media relations
- Evacuation decisions
- Dealing with unsanctioned shelters
- Dealing with multiple evacuation sites
- Documentation of notices
- Repopulation – when & how
- Social media (evacs and looting)
- Emergency notification systems in place prior to event
The Power of Social Media

Biggest Lesson--
All emergencies are local emergencies
The most important thing is our relationships
Thank you for the opportunity to share with you today!

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Valley Fire Response

Todd Derum
Division Chief
CAL FIRE
Valley Fire Response

Wendi Thomas RN, MSN
Nursing Director
Petaluma Valley Hospital

Where is Petaluma?
Neighboring Hospital Support

- Prepare and be available for overflow of patients – inpatient and outpatient
- Educate on resources available
- Inventory supplies to send if necessary
- Free up traveling RNs
- Collaborate as a region within health system

The Call For Help

Hi all;
I am working with the Emergency Operations Committee (EOC) for the Valley Fire and here is their status and needs:
Ole Health set up a clinic on site from 8am-11pm to help the hundreds of those that were evacuated. Many left without their medical equipment and prescriptions. The prescribing pharmacy burned and records are not obtainable for many of these folks. The immediate needs are for practitioners to help tomorrow and Wednesday with the clinic. We have sent nurses and will ask for additional volunteers to help with the first aid. The hospital is going to support the efforts as well and is looking at sending a pharmacy cache up for immediate needs and filling short-term prescriptions. If you are available to help in the clinic tonight, tomorrow, or Wednesday, the hours are listed below. Any full or part shifts are appreciated. I will coordinate it for the EOC and let them know. St. Helena Hospital is supporting as best as they can, but many of their people were evacuated themselves.
Shifts Needed:
Evacuation Center — Calistoga

- Ole Health – primary clinic coordinator
- American Medical Response – staging areas with advanced life support rig on standby
- Staffing by clinic staff – volunteer physicians and nurses
- Coordination with local hospitals and pharmacies

Evacuation Center — Calistoga (cont.)

Patients seen
- 75 patients per day
- Primary diagnoses
  - Med refill
  - Asthma/Respiratory illness
  - Diabetic teaching
  - Back pain
  - STEMI
  - Mental health
  - Heat-related illness
Health Care Challenges/Successes

• Getting prescriptions filled and paid
• Tent visits
• “What is your address?”
• Privacy
• Paperwork 😊
• Clinic staff
• Coordination with Red Cross nurses

Evacuation Center – Calistoga Fairgrounds
The People

My Car is Fine ...
Donations/Supplies

Donations/Supplies (cont.)
The Pets

After the Ashes Settle
September 2015

Challenge

Huge number of evacuees, small amount of time and limited local resources
What We Do

- Shelter
- Feed
- Comfort

How We Do It

- Health services
- Disaster mental health
- Disaster spiritual care
- Safe & well
Recovery

- Bulk distribution
- Client casework
  - Referrals
  - Financial assistance
- Long-term recovery

Partnerships

- Initiate, build and reinforce
- Strengthen collaborative efforts
- Plan for the future
Opportunities

- It is never soon enough!!
- Perceptions
- Opportunities to work toward excellence
- Getting to yes

Disability Integration

- To collaborate with partners
- To ensure equitable service for people with disabilities, and other access and functional needs
- To have the focused attention of one activity
- To educate internally and externally
- To educate vertically and horizontally
Questions?

Thank You!

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