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

Eleanor Guzik, RN, NP  
Pacific Division Disaster Disability Integration Coordinator  
American Red Cross
Anne Reynolds, MS  
Division Disaster Director  
American Red Cross
Wendi Thomas, RN, MSN  
Nursing Director, Emergency Services, Critical Care & Nursing Administration  
Petaluma Valley Hospital

Brian Martin  
Sheriff/Coroner and Emergency Services Director, County of Lake
Todd Derum  
Division Chief  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
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

Welcome to California
The most disaster prone state in the nation
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
Communication – Coordination – Collaboration

"PROGRESS THROUGH MUTUAL AID"

The most important thing is our relationships
Thank you for the opportunity to share with you today!

Brian Martin, Sheriff-Coroner OES Director
Lake County Sheriff Department
Office (707) 262-200
brian.martin@lakecountyca.gov

Todd Derum
Division Chief
CAL FIRE

Valley Fire Response
TODD DERUM

Division Chief – Sonoma County Operations

Incident Commander – CAL FIRE ICT 4

Began my career as volunteer firefighter in Sonoma County and CAL FIRE seasonal firefighter in Lake County

VALLEY FIRE
VALLEY FIRE

Infrared fire perimeter 12 hours after start

VALLEY FIRE
Other Incidents

**Butte Fire** – Amador/Calaveras County
65,000 acres
CAL FIRE IMT 1

**Rough Fire** – Fresno County
117,034 acres
CAL FIRE IMT 2 /USFS

Operational Priorities

Life Safety:
- Imminent Peril Rescues
- Evacuations

Structure and Infrastructure Defense

Perimeter Control
Lessons Learned

Multi-disciplinary disaster preparation

The value of ICS as a management by objective system

Planned strategic transitions

Responding to friends and family

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
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!

Eleanor Guzik, RN NP
Eleanor.Guzik@redcross.org

Anne Reynolds, MS
Anne.Reynolds@redcross.org

Wendi Thomas, RN, MSN
Wendi.Thomas@stjoe.org

Brian Martin
Brian.Martin@lakecountyca.gov

Todd Derum
Todd.Derum@fire.ca.gov