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## Together in Training

*Lamorindans cooperate for EOC drills*

By Cathy Dausman



Lamorinda emergency preparedness volunteers.  
Photo Dennis Rein

Texas A&M Engineering Extension Services and hosted by Saint Mary's College's Adan Tejada, chief and director of the department of public safety.

Rein has worked to develop EOCs for each Lamorinda city and the college, and said they have come a long way since he came to the job three years ago. Now Rein hopes to build a more cohesive unit. "This training session opened the door for one Lamorinda city being able to provide staff to another during a disaster," he said.

Participants used Federal Emergency Management Agency handbooks to solve financial, logistical and operational problems triggered by each training event. They learned to prioritize life and safety issues, stabilize the event, conserve property and return the affected area to a post-event normal. They also learned how to request county, regional, state or federal assistance.

"This class will ask [you] more questions than [supply] answers," warned senior training specialist Bill Long on day one. Still, "Lamorinda is a much better place since this [training]," Rein said.

"There is a lot of power in cooperation," Moraga police chief Robert Priebe agreed, saying the training was "very valuable on many levels."

Priebe, along with Orinda police chief Scott Haggard, acted as joint EOC managers during the final, day-long exercise. "The best part was getting all three cities and Saint Mary's College all together," Priebe said. "I thought it was an outstanding opportunity to work with other city staff," echoed Haggard, whose advice to exercise participants was to "stay calm, slow down and document [the work being done]."

Moraga-Orinda Fire District fire chief Stephen Healy thought the training was "a great example of local partnerships that benefit the community."

"Sharing resources will be key in a major event," he said.

"Basically, strangers from three cities that normally don't work together had to pool their talents and make the simulation work," added MOFD battalion chief Darrell Lee. Lee credits the idea of combining Lamorinda cities for emergency preparedness to former MOFD chief Randy Bradley.

Participant Steve Ehrhardt, Orinda facilities and parks supervisor, said he was "eager to learn, in a practical way, what the functions of an EOC are and what we as representatives of the community can do better to prepare ourselves in the event of a full-scale emergency situation." Training manager Scott Brown saw "passion and the desire to learn" throughout the Lamorinda session. He noted the importance of "full involvement from top to the bottom in the jurisdictions involved."

"Citizens must trust their government is prepared for the next emergency," he explained. "Your emergency responders have vowed to run towards the problem, not away from it. They are training to be ready. They know what they are doing," he said.

Although it took nearly a year to organize this EOC training, Rein already hopes to do it again. He summarized the results in a single word: "Awesome!"

While Lamorindans recently went about their daily business, more than 30 professional and volunteer first responders and civic employees wrestled with the after-effects of imaginary tornadoes and mock terrorist attacks.

The group, which included representatives from Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, Moraga-Orinda Fire District, Saint Mary's College, Cal Fire, Contra Costa County Emergency Operations Center, The Red Cross, a local amateur radio group, the Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team, East Bay Regional Park District, the Disaster Medical Assistance Team, and others, attended a three-day training exercise at Saint Mary's College where they learned how to run an Emergency Operations Center.

Communities open an EOC site when a natural or man-made disaster requires management and support beyond the scope of the incident itself. California opened EOCs during the Tuolumne County Rim Fire and the 2010 San Bruno gas pipeline explosion. This EOC seminar was the first of its kind within Lamorinda.

Lamorinda Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein organized the event, which was taught by personnel from the Emergency Services Training Institute of



Duncan Siebert, Lamorinda CERT, confers with Cheryl Teixeira of the Moraga Police Department during an EOC drill at Saint Mary's College. Photo Dennis Rein

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