

MOFD hosts International Disaster Management Seminar

By Nick Marnell



From left, MOFD seminar participants from Namibia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, South Africa and Myanmar (Burma). Photo MOFD

Disaster preparedness and response professionals from around the world converged on the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Aug. 20 seeking to enhance their ability to prepare for and respond to natural disasters. The district sponsored the final exercise of

the 2018 U.S. Forest Service International Disaster Management Seminar, which included 29 participants from 21 countries all over the world.

The district put on a Sand Table exercise that included two modeled incidents based on a

scenario of a large earthquake ripping through the Hayward fault. One part of the exercise included an evacuation caused by a potential weakness in Briones Dam while another group had to deal with a wildland fire threatening homes on the Orinda-La-

fayette border.

MOFD staged the exercise at Fire Station 45 and included simulated TV news reports, radio transmissions and written communications for the participants. The participants used knowledge they had gained over the first two weeks of the seminar to implement the Incident Command System and the coordination required at the local, regional, state and national levels of government. "They dealt with the entire scope of a disaster, including political issues," said Dennis Rein, MOFD emergency preparedness coordinator, who hosted the event.

Participants grabbed dinner at the Orinda Safeway, and they ate and shared disaster response stories at the Orinda Community Park, across from the fire station. Rein said the sartorial award went to the forest general director of Tunisia, who wore his full military uniform everywhere he

went, all day long.

The 15-day seminar included time with the San Francisco Fire Department, the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Cisco Systems and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services. Some participants went to the Mendocino Complex Fire to observe the coordinating efforts used in handling that major disaster.

"The idea was for them to see how the U.S. manages large-scale incidents," Rein said. "The event provided great international exposure for MOFD." And every participant – including the Tunisian general – went back to their home country with an MOFD hat and T-shirt.

Volunteers from Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team and the MOFD communications support unit aided the district in putting on its portion of the seminar.

Orchard Supply Hardware closure

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Moraga has dealt with a struggling retail sector for years, and Bruzzone said that the OSH news did nothing to halt the narrative. "We've been trying to get these vacancies filled up. We turned the corner with the Canyon Club and La Finestra, and now this," Bruzzone said, speaking of the brewery scheduled to open in the fall across from OSH, and the restaurant moving into the Moraga Shopping Center in October.

"With every door that closes, one opens," Nelson said. "We hope to bring something back into town soon." Trotter added that the newly improved OSH building "presents another attractive opportunity for a new and

viable retail tenant along Moraga Way, which I believe the town can and should encourage."

On that note, Bruzzone mentioned that he has been actively looking for a grocery store. "We know that Moraga is a great place for retail and commercial," he said.

One business owner had every reason to gloat over the OSH departure, but he did not. "I respected Orchard as a chain. They were a solid, viable competitor," said Bill Snider, president of Moraga Ace Hardware. "We welcome those who looked at Orchard as the town's main hardware store."

Residents urge city council to enact gun control legislation

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Jenifer Balducci suggested that, as there are no gun dealers in Orinda yet, it is the perfect time to enact an ordinance to not allow gun sales in the future. (Pleasant Hill was sued by a pre-existing gun dealer.)

Moraga resident Alison Anderman is the managing attorney at the Gifford Law Center. San Francisco was the first jurisdiction to adopt a safe storage law, she said. The gun lobby sued, and they lost in the trial court, lost in the 9th circuit, and the Supreme Court declined to review the case. After San Francisco nine other jurisdictions have enacted safe storage laws and none have been sued. "Moraga was also worried about being sued," Anderman said, "so (The Gifford Law Center) secured the services of Farella Braun and Martel a prestigious litigation firm to defend the town pro bono, and we pledge the same support to Orinda." She added that she is very happy to work with the city attorney and happy to provide free drafting assistance. She suggested that Orinda could face a bigger cost if the city fails to take modest reasonable steps.

The council asked staff to conduct additional research about other ordinances passed in other cities, ways to limit litigation risk, specifics gun sales and permits, and what kind of legal framework exists for this type of gun storage ordinance.

Wolff said she would research this, noting that there would need

to be an analysis to assure that the city doesn't effectively ban guns.

Council Member Darleen Gee asked if Nagel was concerned about enforcing this ordinance.

"I am concerned that it would be interpreted as violation of Second Amendment rights," Nagel said. "How far do you want us to go? Investigating? Asking questions?"

Orr noted that there had been a tremendous amount of correspondence on this issue and that the message to the council is clear. "I just want to make sure that whatever we do we have a policy in place so we don't place the city with an undue amount of risk, either legal or financial," he said, adding that it is critical that the ordinance can be supported by the Sheriff's Office. "We have to be able to have our law enforcement stand behind it." He asked for further clarification between state ordinance and proposed local law and a better understanding of how they work together.

Mayor Amy Worth asked staff to return to council with more information and to identify any other issues they come across so the council can make a decision in the future.

To view the video of the Aug. 21 city council meeting, visit <http://orindaca.iqm2.com/Citizens/SplitView.aspx?Mode=Video&MeetingID=1415&Format=Agenda>.

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