

Published October 31st, 2018

Springhill residents talk disaster preparedness on eve of National ShakeOut Day

By Pippa Fisher



Lafayette Police Chief Ben Alldritt supervises as members of city staff, police, fire, Lamorinda CERT and the Emergency Preparedness Commission take part in the National ShakeOut Oct. 18. Photo Jeff Heyman, City of Lafayette

with copies of documentation on a thumb drive. Seibert explained that getting documentation together is easy to do now but "very hard to do when it's not there."

Alldritt shared footage of the Oakland fires and explained there have been many lessons learned about evacuation procedures from those and from last year's Santa Rosa fire.

Heather Tiernan, manager of the Contra Costa County Community Warning System, was on hand to help residents register their cell phones. She emphasized the importance of signing up for CWS alerts in addition to Nixle notifications, explaining that the CWS is used by the sheriff's office when there is a threat to human life or health and when there is an action to take.

This was Alldritt's first presentation of its kind as police chief. He says he is happy to take the message to other groups within the city and acknowledged the success of having CERT, CWS, and ConFire all present at the meeting. He says that while they never know in advance what a disaster might look like, his goal was to get the conversation started.

"Informing people what they can do to prepare their families for the unexpected and advising them on what their local agencies are doing to be prepared makes it invaluable," he says.

Alldritt explains that in a large catastrophe, individuals could face delayed response time and may have to look after their family and neighbors. "You need a backup plan for water, food and where to meet."

"Emergency/disaster preparedness is a priority for the city and police department," says Alldritt, pointing out that the police department under the previous police chief worked tirelessly with the Emergency Preparedness Commission over the last several years to maintain and update city plans. He adds that the feedback he received included the comment that it was nice to know the LPD has a plan coordinated with fire and other departments.

Indeed, the following day LPD joined forces as part of the Great ShakeOut with city staff, ConFire, the emergency preparedness commission and Lamorinda CERT at the Veterans Memorial Hall to practice procedure.

Alldritt led city staff through the setting up of an emergency operations center and the establishment of an incident command system as they practiced their response to several potential earthquake-related consequences such as flooding, fires, evacuations and downed power lines.

Ironically, the proposed national ShakeOut Day testing of the community warning system was canceled in Lamorinda due to an actual emergency - a gas line fire in Bay Point - in order to avoid any confusion. Residents received notification of that via Nixle.

Residents can sign up for CWS alerts by visiting the website <https://cwsalerts.com/>.

It's a nightmare scenario that no one wants to think about, but the audience heard the message loud and clear at a recent neighborhood meeting: have a plan, be prepared. In the case of a wildfire or large earthquake, residents need to be ready to evacuate.

The well-attended Oct. 17 meeting, arranged by the Springhill Homeowners Association, took place on the eve of the Great ShakeOut - a day when millions of people worldwide drop and cover to practice earthquake drills.

Springhill residents, aware that theirs - like many others within the city - is a neighborhood with one road in and one road out, heard from new Police Chief Ben Alldritt and from Contra Costa Assistant Fire Chief William Pigeon about evacuation plans and the importance of having a "go bag" ready.

Lafayette's director of the Community Emergency Response Team, Duncan Seibert, explained the importance of having food and water ready to go, along

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