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## MOFD hosts international disaster preparedness seminar

By Nick Marnell



International disaster management seminar participants strike a pose at MOFD Station 45  
Photo courtesy MOFD

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District hosted a portion of the U.S. Forest Service International Disaster Seminar Aug. 19, a program that brought together response professionals from around the world to help them improve their ability to respond to natural disasters. Twenty-five participants from 19 countries participated in the seminar, which covered three weeks in various locations of Northern California.

At MOFD Fire Station 45, the participants divided into three groups - first responders, the emergency operations center and the policy group. Each group played a role during a simulated earthquake disaster in Orinda. The first responders used the MOFD sand table simulator to play out an emergency response to a major water main break, natural gas leaks, a wildland fire and a potential dam failure with the associated evacuation concerns. The EOC staff coordinated and supported field operations while responding to the concerns and direction from the policy group, which had to deal with

emergency declarations and the cancellation or relocation of the upcoming Orinda Community Fair.

"The goal of the exercise was to give the participants an opportunity to use the knowledge they have gained over the past three weeks to organize and respond to a simulated disaster. The hope is that they will take the information back to their home countries and implement the principles of our Incident Command System," said MOFD's Dennis Rein, who coordinated the Aug. 19 event.

The seminar offered the visitors an opportunity to see how the community and the public sector work together in disaster preparation, mitigation and response. The group toured the North Orinda Shaded Fuel Break to see a real life example of such an undertaking.

Rein said he was especially impressed with the participants from Ethiopia, who planned to take the information they learned back to their country and apply it to not only natural disasters but to problems involving regional conflicts, drought and famine.

Reach the reporter at: [nick@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:nick@lamorindaweekly.com)

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