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## Lamorinda runs a successful virtual evacuation information drill

By Sora O'Doherty



Zonehaven Evacuation Platform Training Photos courtesy MOFD

receiving an alert, residents were requested to respond to a brief survey and CERT members were asked to say whether they could assist within an hour. Over 100 responded that they could.

The fictional scenario for the exercise was that a fire started at 3 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 9 near the Briones Archery Range (Seaborg Trail at Crescent Ridge Trail) in Briones Regional Park. By 6 p.m. the fire was approximately 70 acres and had reached the crest of the ridge above Russell Research Station. By 9 p.m. several spot fires were reported, including one near Sundown Terrace and Dalewood Drive and another high on the ridge east of the main fire above Bear Creek Road. The fictional fire had grown to 230 acres.

Dennis Rein, MOFD Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, reported that during the drill, an Orinda Police Department Sergeant was the evacuation ordering official. Messages were sent out via CWS, Nixle as well as pre-exercise notifications via city manager newsletters, and social media. Rein said that the GMRS and HAM radio response to the exercise was excellent, with the two receiving stations fielding about 50 radio contacts. In addition, Lamorinda CERT tested their call-out paging system and sent over 600 text messages to see if CERT volunteers would be available to respond if needed.

The drill had a number of objectives. The exercise tested the Contra Costa County Community Warning System's ability to notify residents in the Lamorinda area in a simulated disaster scenario. Lamorinda residents were asked to sign up for CWS alerts on their notification platforms and to receive a CWS alert and troubleshoot any issues directly with CWS after the exercise. The joint agencies practiced setting up and operating a Unified Command with law, fire and cooperating agencies in a large-scale wildfire scenario and to practice the proper XCC CWS alert call process using Sherriff's Dispatch, CWS, local police department personnel. City and town staff were used to receive a handoff of Zonehaven information from CWS and practice updating evacuation details in the Zonehaven application (arrival points, road closures, etc.) In addition, the drill was meant to identify potential areas where communication can be improved between the field, CWS and the Zonehaven AWARE websites.

Had there been a real emergency, only zones actually affected would have been alerted, and residents would have been provided with evacuation information specific to their evacuation zone.

More information on the community warning system can be found at the following website:<https://cwsalerts.com>

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