

COASTSIDE EMERGENCY CORPS

OES TENT EXERCISE 18AUG16

Half Moon Bay Airport (HAF)

Post-exercise review

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www.CECportal.org

During a disaster, normal buildings may potentially be damaged to the point of being unsafe or impossible to use, or the emergency may be in a remote or isolated location. Either way, disaster response and relief services still need to be provided to the public.

In order to meet this need, the San Mateo Operational Area Office of Emergency Services (OES) has a trailer containing multiple, portable tent structures that can be deployed to anywhere they are needed, inside or outside of our county. These tents have windows, doors, waterproof floors, lights, roof vents and metal tables and shelves. The tent trailer also contains folding chairs and a generator capable of powering all 5 tents.

Another reality of large-scale emergencies and disasters is that the first responders who are on duty will be quickly overwhelmed with calls for service. During these extraordinarily difficult times, trained and vetted volunteers represent a critical resource to assist emergency responders in a variety of ways, whether it's performing light search-and-rescue, assisting with evacuations, rendering first aid, evacuating large animals, communicating by ham radio, helping at Red Cross shelters, etc. We are fortunate to have the Coastside Emergency Corps (CEC), a team of dedicated volunteers who can provide these skills. On August 18, 2016, the CEC held an exercise at Half Moon Bay Airport to learn how to assemble, use and disassemble these robust tent structures, which is a skill that would be very helpful during a real event. Half Moon Bay Airport, which is capable of handling large military transport aircraft (such as the C-130 Hercules, used frequently in disaster response and delivery missions) would perform a critical role during emergencies when roadways are closed. The Half Moon Bay Pilot's Association is also looking into forming its own Disaster Airlift Response Team, or DART, increasing the airport's significance as a disaster relief hub for the Coastside.

Almost forty CEC members arrived for the 8:00 AM sign-in and briefing. This is an excellent turn-out for a workday volunteer exercise. The tents were delivered by OES Coordinator Dan Bennett, and Coordinators Steve Mahaley and Jeff Norris began their expert instruction, from how to organize the various parts bags to the safe and correct sequence of assembly steps of

these complex structures. Once the four small and one large tent were assembled, members trained in Red Cross Shelter Operations set up a tent to simulate an intake/evacuation site.

In another tent, eleven CEC hams, representing both SC4 and HMB Amateur Radio Clubs, established a ham station, installing UHF, VHF, and HF radios, including a portable HF antenna. Strong, clear radio contacts were made into mid Half Moon Bay with both the UHF and VHF radios. In addition, out-of-area contacts were completed using the HF computer, demonstrating the ability to transmit and receive information, given reasonable conditions, to Cal OES offices in Sacramento. While the equipment was powered by a generator for the exercise, the operators also have back-up battery power capabilities for many hours of self-contained radio communications when power is out and landline/cellphone service is not operational.

Following a short hydration and snack break, the lengthy process of disassembling, properly repacking and returning the tents into the trailer began. During the end-of-exercise debriefing, members shared their thoughts and comments on the success and usefulness of the exercise. No negative comments were received; members were in agreement that the exercise was very beneficial. No injuries occurred during the 4-hour exercise.

The Coastside Emergency Corps would like to thank Half Moon Bay Airport Manager Marty Wray for his cooperation, hospitality and assistance, and the American Red Cross and Carlo Wei from the City of Half Moon Bay for their participation and enthusiasm in helping make this Emergency Response exercise such a success. Building personal and professional relationships BEFORE disaster strikes is critical to our shared goal of better serving the community in times of need.



OES Coordinator Steve Mahaley explains the color-coded tent component bags



OES Coordinators Steve Mahaley and Jeff Norris instructing CEC members in the safe and proper way to assemble tent frames



CEC members demonstrate great teamwork and communication in assembling tents



Tents begin to take shape as the exercise progresses



Tents have been successfully assembled and are being prepped for specialized uses



Red Cross volunteers with evacuation site tent





CEC Ham Radio Operators set up a tent as "Radio Shack" and make several contacts



Another successful exercise for the Coastside Emergency Corps