

Emergency Drill – October 20, 2018

by Pat O’Coffey

On October 20, ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Services) from La Honda and South Skyline conducted their annual Simulated Emergency Test. This year, they teamed up with the following agencies to conduct a disaster drill in 5 neighborhoods along the Skyline corridor:

- Southcoast CERT
- South Skyline CERT
- San Mateo County Large Animal Evacuation
- La Honda Fire Brigade
- Saratoga-Summit Cal Fire

The drill began with the Stanford Life Flight helicopter landing in a new landing zone in Castanea Ridge. This new Landing Zone was built thanks to some very hard work on the part of Castanea Ridge resident, Bryan Osborne, and other community members. Bryan first envisioned creating this Landing Zone while talking to a local resident who flies for Life Flight. They both felt that this location would be ideal. The South Skyline Emergency Preparedness Organization (SSEPO) provided some financial assistance for this project, thanks to your generous donations to SSEPO. It was amazing to watch this big bird land in such a small space – see photo in this issue. The crew gave a great talk about the capabilities of Life Flight.

The scenario for this drill was 3 days after a devastating earthquake. The tasks to be completed were a damage assessment in 4 Skyline corridor neighborhoods and the evacuation of 6 horses. SC4ARES from La Honda brought their mobile HAM radio resource trailer to the incident staging area at Skyline Ridge Preserve. With the support of the La Honda Fire Brigade and Saratoga-Summit Cal Fire, CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams) were dispatched to 4 Skyline neighborhoods to conduct post-earthquake damage assessments. It was assumed that the massive earthquake had disabled all traditional forms of communication. Therefore, the CERT Teams utilized their GMRS (General Mobile Radio Service) radios for communications within the neighborhoods. The information gathered within the neighborhood was then transmitted to our new GMRS Repeater, where it was then relayed, via HAM radio, to the HAM operation center at Skyline Ridge. In a real emergency, this information would then be transmitted to the appropriate emergency agencies in Half Moon Bay or Redwood City. From there, needed resources, such as medical support, helicopter evacuation or fire suppression, could be dispatched to our area.

The drill included radio communications requesting assistance in evacuating 6 horses from 2 Skyline neighborhoods. From the staging area at Skyline Ridge, Large Animal Evac was dispatched to the horses that needed evacuation. This was a great learning experience for both the animal handlers who were doing the evacuations and the horse owners who need to have their horses prepared for evacuation.

The drill also gave us the opportunity to unveil our new mobile medical response trailer. Thanks to the Red Cross, SSEPO recently received an unused trailer, which Dr. Rich Lee has converted into a mobile medical response unit – see Dr. Lee’s article in this issue. This is a great addition to South Skyline emergency preparedness. The medical trailer can be used for deployment into the neighborhoods for emergency medical treatment and for transportation of victims if necessary. Phase I of creating the medical trailer was financed by SSEPO, thanks again to the many generous donations South Skyline

members have made to SSEPO. SSEPO is a non-profit 501c3 organization. If you would like to donate to SSEPO, you may do so by logging onto www.ssepo.org and selecting DONATIONS on the Home page or under "Volunteer".

By all accounts, the drill was a huge success. Each of the participating groups had their own set of objectives, and for the most part, those objectives were met. There were a total of 39 participants: 22 CERT, 9 ARES, 7 LAEG, 1 other.

As with any drill, there are successes and failures. It is the failures that teach us the most valuable lessons. It takes practice and preparation to be successful in an emergency. Drills such as the October 20th event help us be more successful when the real disaster strikes. Thank you to the many volunteers who participated and the Castanea Ridge residents who contributed to the development of the Landing Zone. And, thank you to La Honda Fire and CalFire Saratoga-Summit for their assistance in planning the exercise and for preparing the landing zone for the Life Flight helicopter.



Stanford Life Flight helicopter landing at new LZ