

South Skyline Nov. 7 Drill Summary

On Saturday, November 7, 2015, South Skyline held an emergency drill. The scenario was a large earthquake that had knocked out all phone / cell communications.

Drill objectives were:

1. Utilize our community response teams (group leaders, CERTs, residents with medical training, HAM operators, other volunteers) in an exercise which involves damage assessment, search and rescue, triage and transportation of victims.
2. Assess ability to activate community resources: CERT, medical and HAM operators to appropriate areas of operation
3. Test effectiveness of community communication infrastructure
4. Test effectiveness of communication with the DOC in La Honda and in San Lorenzo Valley, from the MROSD Skyline Field Office, Las Cumbres and Portola Heights. Tests to include 2m, 70cm, and 6m FM and 6m LSB

Participating neighborhoods were: Portola Heights / Castanea Ridge, Las Cumbres, Rocky Creek, Monkey Rock.

This report covers the neighborhoods of Portola Heights, Rocky Creek and Monkey Rock and the Ham Radio connectivity tests. A communication report is separate. Las Cumbres will provide their own report on specifics within that neighborhood.

My overall comment is that this turned out to be more of an “exercise” than a drill. My expectation for this drill was that only the team leaders would know what to expect and that none of the other players would receive any instructions until after the earthquake event occurred. It was not my expectation that the medical facility and communications at the Skyline Field Office would be set up in advance of the event; I wanted to know how quickly these operations could be activated after the event. It was also not my expectation that the CERT teams in Portola Heights would know exactly where the victims were immediately following the event; there was no “search / rescue” and CERT skills were not really tested --- cursory triage and with one exception, pretend techniques to provide victim transportation. To me, this represents an **exercise**, not a drill.

So, relative to the objectives stated above, my assessment is below. What to do differently next time is in red.

Objectives 1, 2 and 3 above within Portola Heights / Castanea Ridge:

- We were able to use our GMRS radios to activate and provide team assignments for the most part. However, the GMRS radio of one of the team leaders failed to work. This caused major problems to both the check-in process and for team instructions as the drill progressed.
 - **Peggy, throw away that Uniden and get a Baofeng**
 - CERT Team 1 had 5 volunteers and 1 victim; volunteers included 1 CERT, 1 medical and 1 ham operator
 - CERT Team 2 had 6 volunteers and 4 victims; volunteers included 2 CERT, 1 medical and 2 ham operators

- One major mistake on the part of the Incident Commander (IC) (me) was that I should have asked first about immediate victims in need of help before asking for check-ins.
 - Always ask for immediate victims first
- The IC was told that Group 5 had already gone to the Skyline Field Office to set up the medical facility and communication structure. This was true, but they returned to the neighborhood for check-ins and the IC did not call for them.
 - IC should not act on assumptions or information that he/she has not verified
- The IC gave each of the two CERT teams their own GMRS frequency for internal team communications, with instructions to return to the Command GMRS freq for reporting to the IC. This did not work out so well. Because the GMRS radio for team 2 leader was not working, the IC needed to pass traffic directly to team 2; there was constant radio traffic on team 2 freq; the IC could not get back to the Command freq for receiving reports from team 1. With team 1, the command freq was working – excellent coverage, but the team secondary freq was not working on some radios.
 - We did have a Ham operator in each team and an assigned 2m simplex frequency. This did help with communications to the IC, but it should have been set up as the primary freq for contact with IC.
 - There was too much traffic for all teams to share one freq.
 - Still use multiple GMRS frequencies for the teams, but have more training. More practice with secondary frequencies. Utilize simplex for IC reporting.
- It was unrealistic that all victims were found immediately following the event. This led to unrealistic communication demands, both from the teams in the field and for reporting to the DOC in La Honda and for the medical facility at the Skyline Field Office.
 - Have a realistic drill: search / rescue of victims
- There was an immediate request for transportation by ambulance on one victim. Information was provided to the transportation team on how to get to the location. In a real event, this would not have been the case. We had two problems in directing the ambulance to the correct location (if they had not had a map): not enough people to dispatch to key intersections and the radio problems stated above.
 - The transportation team did an EXCELLENT job of getting that victim properly and safely loaded and transported.
- Because of the radio problems stated above, the IC lost track of personnel.
- Communications with La Honda DOC and to the Skyline Field Office from Portola Heights worked very well, with just a few key learnings.
 - Need more training on IC structure
 - Use Tactical signs
 - Remember to use “this is a drill” more often.

Rocky Creek

This neighborhood is in the early stages of developing their community network. For this drill, they opted to activate their phone tree and that worked well, with a key result getting updated information for the tree. There was one HAM radio operator in the group and this was a failure – no reception to the West. One victim was transported to the Skyline Field Office for treatment. It was noted that only having one CERT person in the neighborhood is a problem.

- Need to evaluate antenna / radio options for this location.

Monkey Rock

One CERT member from the neighborhood went to the Skyline Field Office to assist Dr. Lee at the medical facility. Three victims were transported to the Field Office for treatment.

Skyline Field Office

The medical facility was set-up in advance of the “event” in the Skyline Field Office. The communication infrastructure – radio and antenna – was also set up in advance. The new antenna pole worked well.

- The following reported to the Field Office during the drill as victims or volunteers, for a total of 34 participants:
 - Victims = 9
 - Medical personnel = 10
 - CERT / Ham Operators = 12
 - Other = 3
- HAM communication with La Honda, Portola Heights and Las Cumbres was very good. (Communication report separate.)
- Originally, radios comms were set up next to medical, but when medical moved its location to inside the ranger station, communications between the two failed. GMRS radios were not working. **Need to identify cause of the radio failure and be sure that multiple radios are available if one fails.**
- One key learning was the failure to set up an Incident Command Structure at the Field Office and the importance of delegation of tasks. There was a lack of a clear leadership role. First person on the scene is IC, then assignments are made when others arrive. Need a large white board to identify IC structure and use tape or tags to attach to vests to identify players, or have identifying vests or different colored hard hats. Need to establish areas and assign CERT leaders for triage, transport/logistics, treatment, and operations. Also need a white board to track incoming victims and their status.
 - **Discuss at next SSEPO Board Meeting**
- Access to the medical facility inside the ranger station was difficult --- not ADA compliant.
 - **Need to talk to Open Space about providing ramps.**
- There was a discussion at the debrief about providing more medical supplies – stretchers, blankets, pillows, etc., and also about setting up additional storage areas for medical supplies in some of the larger neighborhoods (eg. – stretchers / collars for transportation and basic first aid care).
 - **Discuss at next SSEPO Board Meeting.**
- **Ranger in attendance will provide a SSEPO with the GPS locations of the helicopter landing pads in the South Skyline Area**

November 7 Skyline Drill Communications Summary

HAM Communications

Communications on HAM radio between all 4 locations (La Honda, Skyline Field Office, Las Cumbres and Portola Heights) worked very well. For primary communications we used 2m SC4ARES 146.730 in La Honda and 2m Las Cumbres 145.450. Both were loud and clear.

In Portola Heights, for communication within the neighborhood, we used simplex 146.535. This frequency was not readable from the Skyline Field Office, but it is worth repeating the test. It's not clear whether this was due to too much traffic from other radios coming in at the time, or not.

After the drill, we completed a connectivity test between the 4 locations with San Lorenzo Valley ARES and on 70cm, 6m FM and 6m USB. San Lorenzo could not be reached by the Skyline Field Office or by La Honda. However, it was good from Las Cumbres and Portola Heights. 6m FM was readable by all, except Las Cumbres from Portola Heights. 6m USB was readable by Portola Heights and Skyline FO; readable for La Honda, except from Skyline FO; readable by Las Cumbres, except from Portola Heights. (Matrix attached). Earlier testing of 6m had better results. Recommend repeating the 6m tests without the stress of the drill.

GMRS Radio Communications

GMRS Radios were used within the neighborhoods of Portola Heights, Las Cumbres and at the Skyline Field Office.

- In Portola Heights, the leader of CERT Team 2 was not able to get through on her radio (needs to replace it with a Baofeng). We had one frequency for command and each of the two teams had their own frequencies for internal communication. Because of the failure of Team 2's radio, command had to switch to Team 2 frequency to give the team instructions. This meant that command was not available on the command frequency much of the time to receive reports from Team 1. Range of the radios was good, except for Team 2 Leader. Need to evaluate the benefit of assigning different frequencies. There was too much traffic for one frequency. Possible training issue on how to use multiple frequencies. There were some failures on the secondary freq in Team 1; need to identify what the problem was. The use of 2m simplex for neighborhood communications helped significantly and may be the answer for reporting to command.
 - At times, Incident Commander at Portola Heights was receiving traffic on 3 different radios on 3 different frequencies at the same time. A scribe is a MUST.
- Las Cumbres reported similar kinds of problems with the overwhelming traffic.
 - Need two gmrs channels for two different nets, splitting the field team. Need to practice starting on one then giving instructions to split off half the field.
 - Having additional dedicated ops Comm channel is good.
 - Having a field monitor-only ops assistant was good
 - Having one guy manage local ops and remote comms was ok, but IC needed a scribe.
- Skyline Field Office
 - The medical facility and radio communications were separated by 100 – 200 ft. The GMRS communication between the two totally failed. Need to identify why and have multiple radios available in case of a failure like this.

Radio Connectivity Test Results: Record as Good, Poor (Readable), Not Readable

| Frequency | La Honda 146.730 (-) (114.8) | Las Cumbres 145.450 (-) (100) | Portola Heights | Skyline Field Office (Ranger Station) |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|--|
| San Lorenzo Valley ARES WR6AOK 147.120 (+) (94.8) | Not Readable | Good | Good | Not Readable |
| 70 cm – Blk Mtn K6FB 442.575 (+) (100) | Not Readable | Good | Good | Good |
| 6m FM 51.560 | Readable | Readable (except PH) | Good | Good |
| 6m USB 50.560 | Readable (except Skyline FO) | Readable (except La Honda) | Good | Good |