

Drill Report



Cupertino
ARES/RACES

1. Overview

Report Date: 17 November 2003
CARES Drill ID: CUP-03-12T
RACES Activation: n/a
Control: Cupertino ARES/RACES
Drill Date: 15 November 2003

2. Planning

Reference Docs: Cupertino ARES, Standard Operating Procedures

Drill Objectives:

1. Evaluate message handling procedures between field assignments and the EOC.
2. Evaluate activity logging procedures using ICS214 by all assignments.
3. Deploy and evaluate CARES EOC & NCS Operations.
4. Include one or more Served Agencies in the exercise.

Scenario:

- Unseasonably high temperatures (low 100's) began 4 days prior to the drill.
- Power has been out since Friday 12:00pm. No estimate as to when the power will be restored.
- California's Independent System Operator reports that several attempts to bring the Western Power Grid back on-line were unsuccessful and that the power system will continue to be unavailable for another 12 to 24 hours.
- Delays in Phone service continue. Cell Phone coverage is non-existent as some cell tower battery backup systems run down.
- There were two sewer spills over night. Cupertino Sanitary District (CuSD) has been operating all night to ensure their pump stations keep ahead of the demand.
- 42 people died over night throughout the County due to heat stroke over the night, 3 were in Cupertino.

3. Preparation

Drill Material:

1. Drill Plan. This document.
2. Message Handling Training Review, 6-November-03 CARES general meeting, Andy W9BJX lead the session.
3. Three email messages to help position the scenario leading up to the drill on Saturday
4. Scenario sheets developed for the following field locations:
 - Cupertino EOC
 - Quinlan Center (shelter and cooling center)
 - Cupertino Medical Center
 - Cupertino Fire Station
 - Seven Springs Fire Station
 - Cupertino Sanitary District, EOC
 - Cupertino Sanitary District, Field Inspector #1
 - Cupertino Sanitary District, Field Inspector #2
 - CARES Rover 3

4. Results

Participants: Andy W9BJX
Ken KR6CO
Phil K6FUZ
Andrew KG6HAG
David KG6JOL
Ian KG6JWG
Kris KG6KPB
LeRoy KG6OGA
Jim KN6PE
Alan KD6QPP
Eric KG6QPT
Richard KE6RJY
Dan KA5TAA
Vince K6TEN
Bill KD6TQJ
Skip WA6VFD
Spence AD6YS

Narrative: 0810. Cupertino EOC at City Hall was opened.

0900. Cupertino ARES initiated the drill on CARES TAC-1 (147.570s) by opening the CARES Emergency Net as a directed net. Check-ins were taken with 17 members present. An overview of the scenario was provided with an update as to the “state of the weather and Western U.S. power failure.” The positions of Shift Supervisor, Net Control Station, and EOC Radio Room operator were staffed.

0910. EOC begins making field assignments to participating members.

0920. Last field assignment is made. Deployed members arrive on station over the next 30 minutes.

0950. Message traffic supporting the Cupertino Sanitary District (stations included their EOC and 2 mobile Field Inspector units) is moved to CARES TAC-2 (146.460s). At least 10 messages were passed between Field Inspectors and the CuSD EOC.

1005. Established contact with members of the Santa Clara County Fire, Cupertino Station.

For over 75 minutes, message traffic was passed between all deployed units and the Cupertino EOC.

1105, Cupertino secured the drill. All units were directed back to the EOC for a debrief.

Observed: NCS and Radio Room Operations were smooth after the initial ramp up.

There was sufficient traffic from CARES Field Responders to verify that overall message handling procedures were performed effectively.

A significant aspect of this drill was CARES’ engagement with the Cupertino Sanitary District (CuSD) and their direct participation in the drill. CARES members staffed the CuSD EOC radio and rode with 2 CuSD employees in CuSD vehicles. Key observations from this drill include:

1. Because of the volume of traffic between CuSD units, Cupertino Emergency Net NCS moved their traffic to CARES TAC-2, thereby freeing up TAC-1 for other urgent traffic.
2. Could have used a fixed radio in the second truck (instead of a member's HT and hot-rod antenna). Richard KE6RJY to address.
3. During an actual event, it appears that the required staffing level per shift for CuSD coverage by CARES would be 1 CuSD EOC operator, and up to 4 operators as shadows for the deployed Field Inspectors. Jim KN6PE to update the CARES SOP with CuSD response requirements.
4. Need to address how to handle 2 nets. The CuSD EOC operator maintained control of the CuSD field units, but had to change channels to pass traffic to the Cupertino Emergency Net. Richard KE6RJY to address.

The **suggested option** is for the CuSD to use a second radio (HT or base station) for CuSD-to-City traffic. We will encounter this same situation when CARES supports a Red Cross shelter, or County Fire equipment staging area. Jim KN6PE to document, review with CuSD, and include in SOP.

5. CuSD covers other city jurisdictions, including portions of Saratoga and Los Altos Hills. Need to address the situation where Cupertino ARES members performing field shadow duties cross into a different jurisdiction. Are we then county responders? How does DSW coverage work if CARES goes outside of Cupertino? Marsha KG6CYV to address.
6. Need a better set of CuSD tactical Calls. Richard KE6RJY to address.

Overall, the experience of working with the CuSD team was excellent and will help CARES refine its response plans for this Served Agency.

- What worked:**
1. We now have a good understanding of the timing and logistics to actually get 2 volunteers on station at remote field assignments.
 2. We got into a good routine of message handling within an hour of beginning the drill.
 3. We had excellent interaction with the members of the Cupertino Sanitary District. They had a first-hand look at how we do things, and we have a much better idea of their job.
 4. Made contact and exchanged information with representatives of Santa Clara County Fire.

- What didn't work:**
1. ICS214 forms were not extensively used in the field. This was not sufficiently stressed as part of the drill.
 2. Observed some people stepping on each other. This is an artifact of the simplex net that we run.
 3. Could use more pro-words and exact phrases when passing traffic.
 4. Need to clarify the procedure for assignment tactical calls to field responders.
 5. Scenario message traffic was light for some field assignments (Rover 3).

Need to develop greater traffic content for future drills.

6. Fire Station response kits do not have SMA-to-BNC Connectors. Need to add to the kit (purchased, need to put in the kits).
7. NCS was initially in the middle of handling messages. Once that was cleared up, message handling was smooth, within 60 minutes of starting the net.
8. We all need to remember our FCC call signs at the end of each message exchange.
9. Health and Welfare need to be made by roll-call.

5. Conclusions

Because CARES members do not drill continuously, we can expect to transition up a “recall” curve to get back into a routine of efficient message handling once we are activated. Therefore, it is critical that our procedures are reviewed, discussed, understood, and practiced as often as possible so that the “recall” curve is as short as possible.