

Topic:	Santa Clara County Fire Department, Emergency Response
Speaker:	Bat. Chief Bob Smith
Date:	Thursday, 6-Sep-01, at 1930
Event:	Cupertino ARES general meeting, Orientation Training, Cupertino Fire Station

The following is a summary of the presentation made to CARES by Bat. Chief Bob Smith on how the Santa Clara County Fire Department will respond.

General

During an emergency, Bat. Chief Smith's role is to respond to either the City of Cupertino or Saratoga EOC.

In the event of a multi-site emergency such as an earthquake, each Fire Station performs the following:

- The Station captain ensures all crew members are safe and not trapped.
- The trucks are pulled of the station, staged on the apron, and communications is established with Fire Dispatch.
- All Gas and electric utilities are secured to ensure the station remains safe.
- The trucks take to the streets and perform a "windshield" survey. This survey involves driving each street and performing a preliminary damage assessment. In some instances, a complete survey will not be possible as units may be dispatched to fires or other emergencies.

For extensive damage, Department Area Branches are established where several Fire Units are coordinated together. The Incident Command System (ICS) is put in place under this structure.

At Fire Dispatch, the department sorts and prioritizes all incoming the calls.

During the Loma Prieta Earthquake, due to the number of calls received, the Fire Department had to send smaller response crews to fight house fires. The objective of this type of response was to keep the fire from expanding (meaning, they may not save the house). Depending on the magnitude of the event and extent of the damage throughout the area, the crew may leave a hose attached to a hydrant with the owner to continue applying water.

CARES Response

The Chief outlined and discussed several ideas as to how Amateur Radio and CARES can help. In all cases, the stated intent of using CARES was to free up the Fire Department frequencies of lower priority message traffic.

1. Ensure CARES understands the Incident Command System (ICS) chain of Command. It was stressed that we need to understand how the Department is structured, how information flows, and where we would fit in as part of the Fire Department's response.
2. Act as local eyes and ears. Because of the distributed nature of CARES, we can provide a lot of information to the Battalion Chief and the Department on safety and life threatening situations over a wide area (our Preliminary Damage Assessment and follow-on reports currently could address this).
3. CARES members shadow the Fire Department command structure. CARES could be assigned to key department responders or units that may require supplemental communications support.
4. Dispatch communicators to Fire Department Staging areas. For instance, if additional Fire units are coming in from out of the area, incoming Fire Department units or ambulances will be staged in places with large parking areas (De Anza College, Valco Shopping Center, etc) prior to being deployed. CARES can support coordination and logistics of moving Fire Department assets.

5. Staff Fire Stations to pass traffic for walk-ups. Fire Stations are logical public buildings where people will look for help. In the event all the trucks are gone, CARES can assist the public by passing on requests for help, or provide directions or instructions based on what is currently known.
6. Pass Health and Welfare Traffic. Most Fire Department personnel do not live in Cupertino. While they are committed to the response, they also worry about the family back home. Passing welfare traffic between Fire Department personnel and their families is a way to eliminate any anxiety as to the situation at home thereby helping Department personnel focus on the emergency. It was mentioned that there used to be some type of packet system in place for this purpose years ago (need to follow up).
7. Provide backup communications in the event County Comm is inoperative.
8. Request language assistance. In our culturally diverse community, the Fire Department often encounters non-English speaking citizens. Requesting language assistance, even if it is relayed by radio, would be a big help.

Revision

26-Sep-01 Original