

TOPANGA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

*January 27, 2021
10:00am – 11:30pm
Zoom Meeting*

MINUTES

Co-Chairs: OEM, Jeanne O'Donnell and TCEP, James Grasso

I. Welcome from the Co-Chair

James Grasso, TCEP. Jeanne O'Donnell was unable to attend.

II. Introductions/Roll Call

III. Mission Statement

The mission of the Topanga Emergency Management Task Force, a partnership of designated public agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community organizations is to ensure the sustainability of emergency management efforts and strategies for the Los Angeles County unincorporated area of Topanga. The Task Force oversees the coordination and communication among governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the community to improve preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery. It will develop, review, and monitor community-based emergency plans, facilitate emergency planning exercises, ensure community involvement and educational outreach, and evaluate and update emergency plans after a disaster.

IV. Public Comments (3 minutes each person)

- Tam Taylor: The East Hillside street sign is labeled West Hillside and needs to be corrected for safety and clarity.
 - Emergency calls go through dispatch, not PulsePoint app. Will follow up offline to discuss fixing this problem.
- Ryan Ulyate: How long does the Frontier backup at the substation by the library last in normal circumstances?
 - Javier Mendoza requested the street address and will look into this.

V. Review/Approval of Minutes of *October 14, 2020 Meeting*

Minutes approved with changes. Keep level of detail moving forward.

VI. Fire Outlook 2021/Evacuation Planning

- Chief Smith provided the fire outlook:
 - We routinely have a prime fire season from June 1 through Sept 31, but the outlook shows a relaxed fire season this year. Fire continues to work with National Weather Service for forecasting.
 - The climatology they are looking at suggests an average to sustainable season. Would rather have later rain than in January, as too much rain too early means soil moisture will not stay. The more rain we get later in season, the better we are for July through Oct because of soil and live fuel moistures. The grass will always eventually brown, but later brown out leads to a lower potential for fire frequency.
- Chief Smith provided an update on evacuation planning:
 - CHP, LAPD, Sheriff, LAFD, LACoF, SMM partners, and Ventura County are all involved in planning how Zones 1-9 in Topanga will evacuate.
 - Zone 10 has been assigned to Sunset Mesa/Pacific View Estates.

- o The nine zones in Topanga are grouped into four quadrants. Emergency responders will look at vulnerabilities based on where a fire starts to determine evacuation routes and orders. There may be instances where some zones evacuate while others shelter in place (which can be safer by not impacting the roads for those who must leave).
- o Remember the new terms for evacuations: orders vs warnings vs shelter in place.
- o Planning for challenges with infrastructure and communication. Law enforcement is trained to manage traffic and evacuations while Fire works with their protective equipment to stop the fire. EOC will have fire operations book that can be referenced. Will communicate traffic control points, evacuation routes, hard closures, how to avoid deviations in task when people don't follow plans, etc.
- Mark Winn: Lost Hills has revamped the Topanga evacuation book and will get it out to LAPD when available.
- Sgt. Riggs: LAPD has jurisdiction over 13 areas with ingress/egress to Topanga. LAPD would assist with traffic control at north of canyon. The press doesn't get to go in with vehicles (can still walk or bike), as the roads are too narrow for vehicles. Everyone at the LAPD Topanga Station has been trained on this. At a fire, police have one of five jobs: 1. being at the Command Post and relaying orders from the Fire Department, 2. force protection for FD, 3. evacuations in areas where FD tells us to evacuate, 4. traffic control, and 5. looting patrol in areas that have already been evacuated.
- Questions:
 - o Tessa Charnofsky: When can we aim to do the evacuation drill? Maybe late summer/early fall depending on COVID?
 - Chief Smith: Working on planning to determine this.
 - o Grasso: Rain is good, but from a Fire perspective, is heavy rain right now good or bad for the end of year?
 - It is actually good. The soil takes up moisture and plants stay dryer internally, so they don't freeze. Higher rain means more water weight, which creates a heat sink (more energy is required to get rid of water in that fuel before it will burn).
 - o Susan Clark: What is the plan for allowing horse trailers in for evacuations? Will smaller trailers be let in, but not larger ones?
 - There are a lot of horse properties, but trailers will only be allowed in if there is enough time. Saving human lives is the priority.
 - o Scott Ferguson: Shelter in place used to be considered a last resort. The education for the public has been centered around get out early in an evacuation. Need to get together with Fire to coordinate outreach and update best practices.
 - o Taylor: Are there any plans in place for a fire emergency fair or drill?
 - A drill was scheduled for last year but was canceled because of COVID. Currently working on rescheduling drill. The schedule has typically been a drill one year, a fair one year, and one year open. Fire is planning on trying to do a drive through event and is looking at dates in late spring/summer, depending on COVID.

VII. Topanga Survival Guide Update/Glovebox Edition

- Grasso: Received the second edition. Some updates are needed and a PSPS section was added. Glovebox edition will have the most critical information. They are very popular at command posts. Should be ready before June.
- David Ford: Are there opportunities for SCE to put information in?
 - o Absolutely.

VIII. California Public Utilities Commission

- Chris Moore: BOS has taken interest in SCE's handling of PSPS and are engaging CPUC and the Governor on the issue. Utilities have authority to shut off power when there is a safety risk, so PSPS will not be stopping anytime soon. Conditions can be put on the use of PSPS and can review PSPS events to determine reasonableness. Unclear how County is going to proceed with this, whether just supporting local communities or opening an investigation.
 - Commissioners feel PGE has improved and are frustrated by SCE.
- Ulyate: Is the issue that SCE is not doing a good job analyzing conditions or something else?
 - There have been a lot of shutoffs and communication is not regular. There have been cases where first responders were left out of loop. There may be a need for greater transparency. We are still in a place of discussing improving the process, rather than direct action.
- Charnofsky: The goal is to reduce the need for PSPS. This might entail hardening grid, etc. What will CPUC's involvement mean for preventative efforts?
 - CPUC has authorized funding for hardening and vegetation management. Reducing PSPS is the preferred measure. They are going to continue working with SCE to get as close to no PSPS as possible.

IX. Southern Cal Edison

- Ford: SCE is looking at how they process and distribute information. PSPS continues to be a challenge at local levels but presents an opportunity to work together with communities and local government. Topanga has not been impacted by PSPS. Preventative readiness work is important in Topanga because of the difficulties with evacuations. Over the past 3-4 months, SCE has been hardening the grid hardening. SCE is working with community stakeholders to identify how SCE can better make residents aware of work being done. BOS motion calls for coordination with DRP and County, and SCE recognizes it has some work to do. He is eager to take creative ideas for improvement back to the company.
- Grasso: PSPS should not be the new normal. We must get the system hardened so this is infrequent.
- Questions:
 - Stacy Sledge: Thanked Ford for the circuit maps. Knowing which circuit you are on is helpful. Are there any updates on getting powerlines underground for the downtown area?
 - A work order has been sent out and the permit was approved. We should see some activity on this in next 30-60 days. Ford will ask the project manager to put together a scope of work and project plan for timelines and expectations in next couple days.
 - Charnofsky clarified the undergrounding will not include Pine Tree Circle. *Correction from the 4/21/21 TEM Meeting: The undergrounding will in fact include Pine Tree Circle.*
 - Jane Terjung: Even if we get the lines underground, if the circuit that feeds it from out of town is on PSPS, then you would still lose power.
 - Ulyate: TCEP can be used as a filter for PSPS. The last PSPS was done well with text alerts and he hopes we can build on that in the future.
 - Roger Pugliese: Communication with pole replacement has been fantastic from SCE. Vegetation management needs work.
 - Taylor: The PSPS communications covers four counties.
 - This is a common problem and SCE is trying to get it streamlined.

X. Elected Offices Updates

N/A

XI. Member Reports

- Sledge: 2021 Access Cards are now available. Community outreach is occurring with Sages and TCEP. Topangasurvival.org needs updates.
- Clark: Susan Clark has joined the Sages Board to help with community outreach. She will be representing Sages with Tam Taylor.
- Taylor: Sages continue to work with Deputy Cerveny and have increased the number of people on the vulnerable population list. Sages are set to send a mailer in March or early April to every household in Topanga to enlist those who have not heard of the program yet.
 - Ford: Could add info on SCE programs (generators, medical baseline, PSPS alerts, etc.) to this mailer.
- Ulyate: The home ignition evaluation program has been turned over to RCD. Home Ignition Zone Evaluations can now be scheduled at www.rcdsmm.org, and there are additional resources there. This is important for making your house as safe as possible in the event of a shelter in place order.
 - Clark: Are there grants available for seniors who can't afford?
 - Not aware of any.

XII. New Business/Announcements

- Reminder: Topanga is Zones 1-9, Sunset Mesa is Zone 10, and Malibu is Zones 11-14.
 - Sunset Mesa can reach out to Winn to discuss radio communications, listen in to TCEP, and get zone updates.
- Megan Currier: Fire is updating the survival guide. Will be discussed more in a smaller group meeting.
- Ulyate: Wants to get shelter in place best practices information.
- Alisa Land Hill: Asked about installing a siren system. There are new federal possibilities for funding.

XIII. Adjournment

Adjourned at 11:44am. Next meeting: April 21st.