

TOPANGA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

*April 21, 2021
10:00am – 11:30pm
Zoom Meeting*

MINUTES

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

I. Welcome from the Co-Chair

Jeanne O'Donnell, OEM. James Grasso, TCEP.

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)

- Jane Terjung: Request that we raise awareness about OES document on shelter in place, as people are unaware. Need to inform the community what it means and give best practices.

V. Review/Approval of Minutes of *January 27, 2021 Meeting*

Minutes approved with no changes.

VI. After Action Report Update

- Kevin McGowan:
- Underlying principle in the action plan is long term investment by county and partners with a foundation in cooperation. The action items were a mix of easy things to accomplish and some long-term efforts. Evacuation and alert/warning components are a top priority. A lot has been going on since Woolsey, but it's an opportunity to leverage lessons out of the back-to-back crises. Ex: setting up of mega pod vaccine sites, direct correlation between Woolsey fire and understanding better unity of effort between agencies. Bobcat Fire was a good comparison to see how we have grown since Woolsey.
- Need effective EOC and JIC together to get info out. Able to have real time info on traffic. GIS team put together a combination of different traffic apps and traffic inputs: Caltrans, CHP feeds, DPW feeds, and private sector (Waze, Apple, Google). Public can view the same transportation incidents and closures as see in EOC.
- OEM Recovery GIS Web Service and Bobcat Fire DINS Dashboard helped get timely info on damage assessments and repopulation efforts broadcasted. Interactive nature. Woolsey highlighted need for dynamic updates on impacts of incidents. On the government side, this also helps us clearly communicate to state and federal partners the scope of event and increases our ability to advocate for disaster declarations and support.

- Showed project plan for alerts/warnings and evacuations for county at-large. Topanga and Malibu already have zones. Want zones in all high fire hazard areas. Efforts are under way to expand the system to the whole SMM. Alert and warning are challenging in LA County because of the number of jurisdictions, varying capabilities, sheer volume of people, rural and urban contrasts, differing infrastructures, vulnerabilities like PSPS, etc.
- How do we build out more capability? Ex: siren systems. No alert and warning tool is perfect, so need a combination of radio, wireless, organic, etc. Doing a feasibility study of sirens and looking at partners in other parts of the state to see what works.
- After Action Report gave 80 recommendations and all have been acted upon. Our progress is being monitored by an outside org quarterly, and we must show evidence of our work. A handful of recommendations have been closed out and none look unachievable. The vast majority related to alert/warning, evacuation, and operations management should be completed by the end of the year.
- Questions:
 - Ryan Ulyate: When creating zones in SMM, will they just expand on the ones already in Topanga?
 - Yes. Grasso is representing in zone meetings.
 - Tessa Charnofsky: Will the feasibility study include more than just sirens?
 - The goal is to broadly define as alert and warning systems in certain geographic areas. Will not be narrowly defined to just sirens.
 - Mark Winn: Private sector traffic companies like Waze have been the biggest hinderance during fires, as they show people ways to get in and out that are unsafe. Any luck guiding them to not take people where we don't want them?
 - It's ongoing. Right now, we are just getting their data and the partnership is not at a place where we can tell them to shut down certain routes. The overarching goal is some kind of formalized agreement.
 - Grasso: Low frequency radios and weather alert radios are a good alternative to sirens.
 - Looking at more than just sirens for enhanced alert warning.
 - Stacy Sledge: Sometimes messaging is not consistent with Topanga's protocols. As we build out, it would be great for messaging to be consistent with local terminology and outreach.
 - Have to balance out nuance with standardization for the sake of efficiency. Will make sure standardized templates are publicized.

VII. Home Ignition Zone Evaluation RCD SMM

- Antoine Kunsch: Program running from July 2020 – Dec 2023. One task is an ember transport study to understand the role of near ground vegetation in fires and how to design defensible space. Doing home consultations and teaching homeowners how to use native plants for defensible space.
- HIZ evaluation is a free review of the vulnerability of your house and landscape to fire. RCDSMM is helping homeowners to prioritize suggestions and considers their budgets. So far have done 92 evals in Topanga, Calabasas, West Hills, Agoura Hills, Oak Park, Pacific Palisades. City of Malibu already has similar program. Always looking for opportunities to increase outreach (defensiblespace.org) for this free service so they can hit their goal of 340 HIZ by Dec 2023.
- Questions:
 - Susan Clark: How is the wildlife issue tackled when talking to homeowners? Wildlife can be affected by tree trimming, etc.

- The HIZ evaluation form does portions explaining how native vegetation supports wildlife in SMM. The goal is native defensible space to protect our homes with minimal environmental impact. The ember modeling study aims to put science behind our anecdotal understanding that a form of natural habitat can be better than just removing vegetation.

VIII. Fire Evacuation Drill Plan

- Megan Currier: Will be held on Thursday Aug 12 at 6pm. Decided to make a this a virtual evacuation drill. All major agencies on board. Target audience is Topanga and Sunset Mesa residents. Participants will login to Zoom and go through everything as if this were real. Will then have a debrief with takeaways, strategies, and a Q&A. Looking at doing a survey after the event for feedback.
- Questions:
 - Charnofsky: Will need everyone's help to get the word out and share the flier. Looking at using library to allow people without internet to participate.
 - Terjung: Can we get KNX to participate for radio?
 - Committee looking at doing this.
 - Winn: Since this will be virtual and without incident command set up, can we explore testing communications and looking for weak signal areas in the canyon?
 - Can examine this in next committee meeting.
 - Clark: Will DACC be there?
 - Yes, will be involved.
 - Terjung: Can Fire partner with RCD to teach people about how to shelter in place at home when they get their HIZ evaluation?
 - Will look at collaborating. HIZ evaluations are performed on the outside of homes, so they wouldn't be able to advise on sheltering in the home.
 - Grasso: Shelter in place system has existed, but there have been updates to the terminology.
 - Three components to terminology: evacuation order, evacuation warning, and shelter in place.
 - Tam Taylor: How do the safe refuge defined spaces fits into this?
 - These are places for the community to go when they need a safe option, but they may not be the best option. In Topanga's environment, you would need 14 acres of open space for 50 people to be safe. Dependent on Fire.
 - May be need for more communication about when residents should not get on the roads. Can maybe include in glovebox editions of survival guide or utilize radios.

IX. Elected Offices Updates

N/A.

X. Member Reports

- Chris Moore: CPUC looking at penalties for SCE for PSPS. However, they have seen improvements in their working groups.
- Taylor: Sages have received funding from SCE to inform community about Operation Knock for seniors and vulnerable population. Mailing will go out early next week to every resident in Topanga.
- Sledge: Town Council met with Pacific Palisades Homeless Task Force to discuss how to deal with this issue in regard to fire safety. Want to increase outreach to stress the importance of not lighting fires. Consider using the winter shelter model for red flag days. Working to do

count in May to map out where PEH are. RCD would like to be included to know where PEH are in habitats.

- Alisa Land: Topanga Elementary is returning to campus this week with reduced numbers. Want to loop LAUSD staff into the fire drill.

XI. New Business/Announcements

- Charnofsky: Tentative county vaccine clinic on May 11 at 10am for PEH in Topanga at library. Will try to have incentives and services. If not J&J, will have 2nd session scheduled.
- Ulyate: How do we start process to get NOAA radios?
 - Need to start with state reps to get movement. Will talk more offline.

XII. Adjournment

- Adjourned at 12:07pm. Next meeting: July .