

After-Action Report Stevens Fire



Cupertino
ARES/RACES

1. Overview

Description: Stevens Fire
Event Date: 30-Aug-2007
Report Date: 10-Sep-2007
CARES Event: CUP-07-100
RACES Event: CUP-07-100
Control: Cupertino OES
Report Revision: 1.1
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Requirements for Reporting

Completing an After Action Report is part of the required SEMS reporting process. The Emergency Services Act, Section 8607 (f) mandates that the Office of Emergency Services (OES) in cooperation with involved state and local agencies complete an After Action Report within 120 days after each declared disaster. Section 2450 (a) of the SEMS Regulations states that, "Any city, city and county, or county declaring a local emergency for which the governor proclaims a state of emergency, and any state agency responding to that emergency shall complete and transmit an after action report to OES within ninety (90) days of the close of the incident period as specified in the California Code of Regulations, section 2900(j)."

i. Introduction and Background

This report covers the City of Cupertino activation in response to a wild-land fire that occurred in the southwest portion of Cupertino on Thursday 30-Aug-07, written from the perspective of Cupertino ARES/RACES (CARES). This report will be input to the City of Cupertino's After Action Report.

ii. Type/location of Event / Drill / Exercise

Event Type: Wild Land Fire; City-wide Activation; RACES Activation
Event Identifier: CUP-07-100
Event Name: Stevens Fire
Location: City of Cupertino

iii. Description of Event / Drill / Exercise

On Thursday 30-Aug-07, the City of Cupertino activated under activation number CUP-07-100 to respond to a wild land fire that occurred in Cupertino south of Montebello Road and west of Stevens Creek Reservoir. This area is characterized by hilly, low accessible, terrain with valleys and ridges running throughout.

The fire was initially reported at 11:45 AM, grew to cover 150 acres and was assessed to be slope-driven in a heavy brush area. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) responded to and took charge of the event.

A Fire Base Camp was established off of Montebello Road in close proximity to the fire. Road closures were in place for the surrounding area because of heavy traffic from responding fire equipment. The Fire Base Camp was subsequently moved to Vasona Park in Los Gatos within 10 hours of the initial response.

Voluntary evacuations were implemented. On Thursday 30-Aug, Cupertino's Quinlan Center (the City's designated shelter site) was opened and staffed by the American Red Cross to assist with any displaced residents seeking shelter. Six to 10 residents showed up at the shelter and were processed by the Red Cross. The shelter was subsequently closed that evening.

Cupertino ARES/RACES (CARES) was activated at the request of the Cupertino OES Director on 30-Aug at approximately 1530. The CARES phone tree was initiated and the 1st Emergency Net was activated at 1600. Twenty CARES members checked in and the event status was passed based on the City's PIO report.

From the 1800 OES briefing, it was learned that communications between the Fire Base Camp and the Cupertino EOC Staff was marginal to non-existent due to poor cell phone coverage around the Stevens Base Camp. A Resource Request was submitted by the Cupertino OES Director for CARES to provide a communications link between the Base Camp and the EOC. During the 1830 CARES Emergency Net, CARES defined and staffed 3 six-hour shifts, and the 1st shift (3 field responders and 1 NCO) was deployed. The first field responder was on site by 2000. At approximately 2300, the Base Camp was moved to Vasona Park and CARES was directed to stand down.

With the help of an inversion layer over the area, CalFire held the fire event area to 150 acres. 2000 feet of hose ultimately was laid. About 350 firefighters were deployed to the scene along with helicopter and tanker aircraft support. No structures were lost and there was no loss of life. Injuries were limited to firefighters; all reported as minor. The fire was reported 100% contained by Monday 3-September-07.

CARES Shifted back to Increased Readiness Ops on Friday 31-August-07, and to Preparedness Ops on Tuesday 4-September-07.

iv. Chronological Summary of Event / Drill / Exercise

This following is the list of CARES events and does not represent activities by other responding organizations and entities. See the Final Cupertino After Action Report for details. All CARES events took place as listed below. All times are listed in local time. The summary is a compilation of net control and ICS-214 logs.

30-August-2007, Thursday

Time	Description, Note, Comment
1530	CARES activates as RACES under city activation number CUP-07-100
1530	Initiated the CARES Phone Tree
1600	Activated CARES emergency net, took check-ins; 20 members on frequency; 1 st read of the Cupertino PIO announcement
1615	2 nd read of the Cupertino PIO announcement
~1630	CARES member KG6OGA reports that he was granted permission to use Sunnyview's 18 seat, wheelchair accessible van if necessary. The information was passed to the EOC.
1705	Secured the net. Directed CARES members to check in at the 1830 net.
1830	Received Resource Request #001 from Cupertino OES Director for Base Camp coverage. Activated the CARES net, took check-ins; 20 members on frequency. Developed a staffing plan for 3 six-hour shifts, each made up of at least 2 field responders and 1 NCO. Determined the availability of members to respond to the Field.
1930	Field Assignments made: 3 shifts: 2000-to-0200, 0200-to-0800, 0800-to-1400. Non-responding CARES members are secured from the net and asked to check in on 31-Aug-07 at 0800 for an update.
2000	First field responder at Base Camp; 1 st responder reports the destination address number given to

Time	Description, Note, Comment
	us was wrong... 15040 vs 10540. Found the right address and directed NCO to guide the rest of the responders in
2010	Second field responder at Base Camp
2022	Third field responder at Base Camp
2045	Welfare check; weather was reported as humid, 68 deg, lingering smoky haze
2115	Welfare check, still waiting for assignments
2145	Welfare check
2245	Welfare check
2250	Base Camp moves to Vasona Park. CARES is directed to secure field operations
2321	The last field responder reports being back home, and checks out of the net
2325	CARES Emergency Net is secured

31-August-2007, Friday

Time	Description, Note, Comment
0740	EOC Radio Room is staffed. Checked in with Cupertino OES Director; City is still activated. CARES shifts back to Increased Readiness Operations
0800	Activated the CARES emergency net, took check-ins; 19 members on frequency. Passed update.
0815	Secured the net.
0816	Secured Radio Room operations.
~1200	City deactivates from CUP-07-100.

4-September-2007, Tuesday

Time	Description, Note, Comment
1945	Weekly CARES net. CARES shifts back to Preparedness Operations

v. Response at SEMS Levels (as appropriate):

Include a summary, conclusions, the field response, and other local, operational area, regional, state or federal response.

No update

vi. Interacting Systems, Agencies, and Programs:

Include mutual aid systems (law enforcement, fire/rescue, medical, etc.); cooperating entities (utilities, American Red Cross, Sheriffs Office, City Departments, etc.); telecommunications and media interactions.

Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff's Office was responsible for perimeter security and property security within the vicinity of the evacuated fire area. Sheriff's Office agreed for the communications support from CARES. CARES' primary contact at the fire scene was Lt. Eastus.

Santa Clara County Fire Department

County Fire made the initial response and transitioned Incident Command to CalFire on CalFire's arrival. County Fire provided additional support as requested by CalFire.

CalFire

State Agency with IC responsibilities for this event. Directed the event initially from a Base Camp located in the immediate fire area, then from the Base Camp at Vasona Park in Los Gatos.

Communications Systems. CARES operated simplex on CARES TAC 1 (147.570s) between the Fire Base Camp and the EOC. Communications were nominal and contact was maintained between the Field and the EOC at all times.

Media Interactions

None by CARES.

vii. Improvements, Conclusions, Recommendations:

As applicable, include a description of actions taken, assignments, associated costs or budget, timetable for completion or correction, and follow-up responsibility.

The following is a summary of the key Improvements, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

What worked?

- Combination of phone tree and OES email notifications reached a lot of people during the work day
- Enthusiasm and availability of CARES members to participate in the field deployment
- Net control procedures and good net discipline
- Radio coverage between the EOC and the Fire Base Camp

What didn't work / needs improvement?

- CARES shift planning
- No cell phone coverage in the EOC
- Could not reach our Fire Base Camp contact to inform him that CARES responders were on their way.
- Reaching the Base Camp by vehicle was difficult due to problems with directions, marking, and on-site instructions.
- There was co-channel interference by County Fire units (mobile and base stations) on all CARE 2 meter radios, Cupertino Radio 1670 AM station appears to be overloading the CARES ATV receiver.

Recommendation

Shift Planning

CARES operations were smooth for the processes that have been practiced. We have previously recognized the need to define and adopt procedures for managing resources, incoming field tasks, and assignments. This is particularly true when needing to staff multiple shifts.

1. Develop the necessary processes and procedures required for managing CARES resources, field tasks, and assignments that span multiple shifts.
2. Update the CARES Response Playbook to include elements of resources, certifications, and response scenarios.

Phone Tree

Changes in home, cell, and work phone numbers are a fact of life. It is the responsibility of all CARES members to ensure that their contact information is as up to date. Under ideal conditions – updated phone tree, phone tree list readily available, phone tree recipients available to take and make their calls – the phone tree process works relatively well. However, any break in the process results in members not being notified. Some CARES members never received their activation calls because of one or more of the above.

3. CARES to adopt the City's 3N System as its primary non-evident event notification system. The system needs to be loaded and tested within 30 days of this report.
4. CARES to reposition the Phone Tree Process as a secondary non-evident event notification process.

Field Deployment Specifics

The CARES deployment was hampered by incorrect and insufficient instructions on how to get to the assignment location. Better resolution maps at the EOC could have helped the EOC staff give better instructions to field responders instead of relying on the trial & error process of "scouts." Radio Room Staff did try to call our contact by telephone to alert him that the response team was en route, but all calls rolled into voicemail. Once on scene, field assignments were not clear as to who they should report to.

5. With the OES Director, clarify the official method by which CARES or the EOC Staff would make contact with requesting field officials such as County Fire, Sheriff's Office, etc., if needed.
6. Review the Field Resource Request process with Cupertino OES Director to identify process improvements.

Field Communications Support

The purpose for our assignment was to provide a link between the Base Camp and the EOC. However, it apparent that general communications with other non-EOC entities was also important. Members of the Sheriffs Office inquired if CARES could initiate phone calls with our equipment. Initiating phone patches has not been a procedure we have previous developed or practiced.

7. Investigate how CARES can provide general auto-patch support. This would include:
 - relocate the CARES' W6TDM Repeater from the Corp Yard to a more central city location that offers a higher antenna mount point and better city coverage, such as Cupertino City Center or the Cypress Hotel
 - work with local repeater owners on agreements on broader access to auto-patch capabilities during an emergency
 - investigate simplex auto-patch support from the EOC

EOC Cell Phone Coverage

This event demonstrated that cell-phone use is an anticipated means of communicating between EOC Staff and field-based ICS officials. The few times that field ICS officials were able to find a cell phone hot spot, they could not consistently contact EOC staff members who operated by cell phone because of little to no cell phone coverage in the EOC (basement of City Hall). The City has discussed plans to install a city hall-wide cell phone repeater to ensure adequate cell phone coverage; this project is expensive and currently not funded. There may more cost-effective alternatives that could be explored to initially cover the EOC only.

8. CARES to propose an EOC area cell phone extender to the OES Director.

viii. Training Needs

1. Shift Planning. Develop training scenarios once the planning process is developed.

ix. Recovery Activities (as applicable)

Recovery activities were limited to EOC Radio Room shutdown and self-performed Field Responder readiness checks.

x. References: Maps, charts, training materials, etc.

The following material was developed and in response to the event:

- ICS 214 forms
- ICS 211B check-in forms
- Resource Request Forms
- PIO notifications
- Hand-written notes from the event

End of Report.