Surrounded By Fire
Response and Recovery to the 2017 Northern California Wildfires

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Napa County EMS Administrator/MHOAC
If you’re going to go through hell… I suggest you come back learning something!

- Drew Barrymore
## A County in Context

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<th>Napa County</th>
<th>Riverside County</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>789 mi² (~10%)</td>
<td>7,303 mi²</td>
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<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>142,456 (~6%)</td>
<td>2,361,000</td>
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Napa has more than 690 mi² (87.5%) Preserved for Agriculture
No Stranger to Disasters
The Setting

- Sunday Evening, October 8, 2017
- First reports of fire come in at approximately 9:30pm
- Most people are at home and getting ready to go to sleep
- High winds/Red Flag Warning
- Dark/Smoky conditions will make situational awareness difficult
- Degradation of cellular phone service began in the first hour of the incident
First Few Hours

- Multiple, simultaneous fires throughout Napa County
- First Responders spent most of the first evening focused on Evacuations and Rescues
  - Large mutual aid requests
- Level III EOC Activation
- Emergency Alerting
- Multiple shelter operations
- What? Other counties are impacted too?
Napa CHP Aircraft rescues 42 people in North Bay Fire

By: Bay City News Service

In winds gusting greater than 50 mph, Pilot Pete Gavitte and Flight Officer/Paramedic Whitney Lowe, rescued 26 people who were trapped on top of Atlas Peak.
Emergency Alerts

- Nixle is used as the primary means for emergency alerting in Napa County
- Between October 8 – October 23, over 75 Nixle Alerts were sent by the County of Napa and City of Napa
- Here are some of the mandatory evacuation notices that were sent out in the first 12 hours of the incident:
Sunday, Oct. 8

11:31 PM
Fire in Calistoga, Knights Valley to Tubbs Lane. Evacuations underway. Evac Center at the Fairgrounds.

11:34 PM
FIRE. Silverado Trl Closed at Yountville Cross Rd. All Soda Canyon residents need to evacuate. Evac Center at 2590 1st.
Monday, Oct. 9

**12:29 AM**
Mandatory Evacuation of Circle Oaks West to Atlas Peak. Evacuate to the East and shelter at Calistoga Fairgrounds.

**1:30 AM**
Advisory Evacuations for Vichy Ave, Hagen Rd and all the Avenues. Evac Center: 2590 1st St at Crosswalk Church.

**3:32 AM**
Mandatory Evacs: Old Sonoma Rd to Buhman Ave, Dealy Lane, Henry Rd, Coombsville Rd, Wildhorse Valley Rd, Carneros Inn.
Communications

• Loss of more than 40 cell towers between Napa and Sonoma
• Most cellular communication down for first 48 hours of incident.

• What worked?
  • Satellite Phones
  • WiFi Calling (but no SMS)
  • Some Radios
Emergency Alerting
Lessons Learned

• Inherent challenges of wireless opt-in systems
• Multi-lingual messaging (Spanish and Tagalog in Napa)
• Nixle Character Limitations
• Wireless Emergency Alerting?
• Sirens?
Dispatch

- Napa Central (Primary PSAP)
  - Average number of emergency calls each day: 150
  - October 8, 2017: 935 emergency calls
  - October 9, 2017: 890 emergency calls
Community Resilience

• How do we prepare our communities to be more resilient in the face of a disaster with limited communication?
First Few Days

- A rapidly escalating incident
- Mandatory evacuation orders continue to expand
  - Increased demand on shelter operations
  - Clinical operations
- Napa State Hospital and Yountville Veteran’s Home
  - State coordination and potential evacuation of State-run facilities
- Public Information
Emergency Operations Center

Days open: 16
Peak EOC staffing: Oct. 11

74 County staff + 23 partner staff = 97
First Responder Mutual-Aid

3,428 Firefighters on 10/17

+150 Law Enforcement Officers deployed on 10/11

14 Strike Teams (72 Ambulances) on 10/10
Tubbs Fire
Calistoga Evacuation Order
Fires start  
EOC Opens  
10/8

Local Assistance Center Opens  
10/16

EOC transitions to Recovery Operations  
10/23

October 2017

8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20  21  22  23

- Calistoga Shelter
- Crosswalk Shelter
  - Napa Valley College Shelter
  - American Canyon HS Shelter
- Evacuations orders in effect
  - Repopulation

Evacuation of Veterans Home patients  
10/10 – 10/11

Repopulation of Veterans Home patients  
10/17 – 10/24
Facility Evacuations

- Yountville Veterans Home SNF Evacuation
  - 142 Veterans moved to facilities throughout Northern California
  - Local vs. State facilities
  - Regional and State coordination for SNF beds needs improvement.
    - Sonoma and Napa were competing for the same beds and sometimes sending more patients than a facility could handle.

- Sonoma County would evacuate two hospitals and the Sonoma Developmental Center
Sheltering

Calistoga
Days open: 4
Peak census: 5

Crosswalk
Days open: 10
Peak census: 215

Napa Valley College
Days open: 9
Peak census: 560

American Canyon HS
Days open: 10
Peak census: 43

Peak census total: 823
Medical Response at Shelters

Northern California Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) supported local medical and health operations at the shelter. Contra Costa County MRC provided a snapshot of needs from 117 clinical visits at the Crosswalk Shelter.
Rapid Needs Assessment Results

Surveyed: 757 people from 210 households

Survey Sites:
• American Canyon HS shelter
• Calistoga Fairground shelter
• Crosswalk Church shelter
• Napa Library
• Napa Valley College shelter
• St. Apollinaris

Primary Language
- English: 52%
- Spanish: 47%
- Tagalog: 1%
Primary Concerns:

- Family member needing medication
- Family member has been separated
- Household has pets that need to be housed
  - Mostly cats, dogs, and horses/ponies
Mental Health Response

PsySTART = Psychological Simple Triage and Rapid Treatment

PsySTART Assessments

Total = 2195
## Air Quality

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- **Air Quality**
  - Good
  - Moderate
  - Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
  - Unhealthy
  - Very Unhealthy
  - Hazardous
Health Risk Communication

Message topics:

- Air quality, wildfire smoke
- N-95 masks
- Mental health
- Food safety
- Clean up safety
- Environmental health
Animal Sheltering

Napa Valley College: 77 animals

Napa County Animal Shelter: 303 animals
Public Information

Media releases: 31 between Oct. 9 – Oct. 23  
Press conferences: 8
In addition to questions about life and safety, call center staff responded to a variety of concerns…

Would it be possible to shoot flares up so we know where the fire is?

How do I keep N-95 masks on the dogs and horses?

Have you considered directing the fire to the ocean?
Weeks and Beyond

- Repopulation
  - Better coordination and communication needed
  - Protecting the public from hazardous conditions
- Local Assistance Center Operations
- Transition from EOC to ROC
  - Recovery Operations Center is still open and meeting weekly
- Rebuilding after the fire
Atlas, Tubbs
and Nuns Fires

Acres burned: 144,987

Structures destroyed in Napa County:

- Businesses: 22
- Outbuildings: 418
- Residences: + 611

1,051

Napa County fatalities: 7
Fires contained: October 31, 2017
Rebuilding

• Massive effort to clean and test more than 7,000 properties
• Lead by the Army Corp of Engineers
  • Confusion about reporting and communication with homeowners
  • FEMA returning to “cleared” properties
• 1.75 million tons of toxic debris removed from the two counties
• Toxic properties post clean-up
Stories of Community Resilience
Napa chefs, Justin-Siena host feast for firefighters, first responders

At a banquet table, a boy holding a hand-drawn card approached four firemen from Gresham, Oregon ... and handed the card to Lt. Michael Snodgrass.

“This is incredible, a huge outpouring from the community,” said Snodgrass.

“We’re no heroes – we happened to be the guys fighting the fires. To get a hero’s welcome makes us all blush.”
Evacuated Veterans Home residents start returning to Yountville

“We are looking forward to having our veterans back home in Yountville very soon.”

By: Howard Yune
Workers from Mumm Napa and Kenwood Vineyards have hammered together more than 400 “sifting” boxes. All for free.

“We’re just trying to do our part,” Dave Kennedy said.

Seeing how the community has rallied during the emergency, “restores your faith in humanity.”
Questions