

## **Presented at May 19, 2016 EMA Member Meeting**

### **Twin Pines Fire Care & Shelter Operation– Vinny Mata, SVDPS**

Occurred on a Friday afternoon. Reports of smoke showing at 1066 Sunnyvale-Saratoga Rd. Built in 1957. Central hallway with apartments on both sides. No attic. Fire doors in place. No fire alarm. Some smoke detectors that were going off. Not every apartment had them. 81 units, 71 occupied. 110 “official” number of occupants but ended up being about 170 people.

Initial reports of rescues which took time and personnel. We put up a lot of ladders to get people out of the second story. There was only one actual rescue. There was heavy smoke and flames in the hallways so people couldn't get out through the hallway. Two females were injured. One with smoke inhalation and one with second degree burns. Woman entered the hallway – even though her apt was not involved and made her way out. Was met by firefighters on the outside to immediately attend to her burns.

Conducted a full evacuation of the complex. It took a while to account for everyone.

AFN Issues. Section 8 housing, low income, people with 2,3,4 jobs, lots of people living in the apartments, some on disability, mental health, medical issues, wheelchair, walkers, mobility, transportation, language, prescriptions/medications, pets.

Minimal structural damage - 1 apartment was a total loss and one was about 66% loss. Extinguished in 1.5 hours.

AFN Issues. Section 8 housing, low income, people with 2,3,4 jobs, lots of people living in the apartments, some on disability, mental health, medical issues, wheelchair, walkers, mobility, transportation, language, prescriptions/medications, pets.

Lots of confusion as people evacuate. Have a process to assemble and account for people. Need to begin case management to determine needs.

Command Post at the Scene and then a second Command Post at the Senior Center shelter. Vinny, Director of City Community Services, 3 of her managers, City Manager and some staff, Library and Community Services staff were at the shelter.

### **Decisions**

- Building Occupancy – Can we put people back?
- How many are displaced and need shelter?  
Trigger for shelter? - Second wing had only light smoke (40 apartments) but there weren't enough exits with part of the apartment closed off so the determination to get everyone out and open a shelter was decided.

### **American Red Cross (ARC)**

Was called in by fire per normal procedure for structure fires.

ARC notified Sunnyvale Senior Center and told them that the shelter was opening.

Mobilization for shelter. ARC, SNY Community Services, SNY OCM, SNY DPS, VTA

### **VTA**

Red Cross called VTA to assist with a bus. They used it as an office to interview the evacuees. Reduced the chaos. VTA also provided shuttle busses from the shelter site to the apartment complex to allow people to pick up belongings. Supervisor was on scene almost immediately. Was willing to do whatever needed. Shuttles all day between the Senior Center and the apartment complex in order to get some personal belongings. One on Saturday and two on Sunday. Boss at the scene. Vinny at the Senior Center. Number of people we sent depended on how many CERT we had on scene. We sent about 6 at a time. Had to prioritize them. Some forgot to get all medications the first time. Some needed tax documents for filing. We posted a schedule at the shelter. Hard to know how long each trip was going to be. About 15-20 minutes. We started assigning times on Sunday. Turned out to be more of a problem. People got mad if the time wasn't exact.

### **Coordination Required**

SNY DPS, City of Sunnyvale, SNY Fire Marshall, SNY Community Services City Department, Senior Center, ARC, VTA, CADRE

Shelter Staffing - Friday – more Red Cross staff, Saturday/Sunday had more City Staff.

Sunnyvale Community Services Non-Profit - Not normal for a Non Profit to do this level of case management and coordinate it.

County Social Services provided some workers to help out with case management. But Sunnyvale Community Services was managing it. Nonprofits need to decide on their level of assistance.

Churches came out and brought some additional resources. Sponsored a dinner for the residents. Tennant rights groups were made available at the hotels.

People were housed at 4 hotels.

No formal Local Assistance Center.

CalOES wanted to know if SBA was going to be needed. Trying to calculate the percentage of loss. Took several days to confirm that they were not going to meet the threshold.

### **Animals**

Fire started evacuating pets. Approximately 25 pets. Accountability of the pets? Hard to tell if they were all out? Missing pets. Listed what apartments they came out of. Animal Control helped. Red Cross does not accept pets in shelters.

Called Milpitas Shelter (Sunnyvale Animal Control has a relationship with them)

and County OES (to try to get the animal control trailer) – took long enough that people made arrangements for their pets and the 5 that were left were taken to the Milpitas Shelter. Waived fees.

### **Resident Vehicles**

Vehicles were locked inside the complex. Keys were in the apartments. Some were not accessible.

### **Residents**

Scared, worried, a lot of questions, not a lot of answers. Where is my pet, can we look for them? When can I move back to my apartment? When can I get access to take things out? I need my keys. Kept calling 9-1-1 trying to get answers. Anger/mistrust toward the owner of the building.

### **Building Owner**

Sat down and talked to the owner to make suggestions to engage. Provided the evacuees units in other complexes that he owned. Provided moving services and storage facilities.

### **Insurance**

Only a couple of people had renters insurance

### **Retrieving Property**

Originally we said, “If you have your car, meet us at the apartment complex.” This was a bad idea. People started offloading their entire houses instead of focusing on the most important items. Red Cross provided hundreds of bags for the residents to use to pick up property.

### **CERT**

CERT was activated to escort the residents to their apartments on Saturday and Sunday. CERT walked them to their apartments and helped them get inside. They were able to provide a personal touch for the residents. CERT were told to bring PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and they did. Sent mental health with people to the apartments on Sunday. Wish we had done it on Saturday. People were distraught.

### **Sunnyvale Community Services (Non-Profit)**

Contacted on Saturday – Marie Bernard. She was overwhelmed and did not have the bandwidth to handle the emergency.

### **CADRE**

Called Anna on Sunday  
Discussion/Decision to activate  
Face to Face meeting with Vinny, Marie, Anna was key!  
Meeting on Tuesday with CADRE members

Overwhelming support - Held a meeting on Tuesday from CADRE. Room was full.

Deactivated CADRE on 5/18/16

CADRE will do a report to EMA next month

### **Time to assess**

We were so busy with the event, we did not step back to plan ahead soon enough.

Transfer from ARC. ARC had personnel case management, mental health, medical

Staffing needs

Planning for following week

Worked closely with SNY Community Services

### **Long Term Impacts on the Jurisdiction**

- Shelter set up and operating – needs staff
- Possible funding for housing, supplies
- Medical needs
- Mental Health needs
- Case Management
- Transportation/escorts to the apartment
- Overwhelming need - overwhelming support – need to be staffed to handle it
- Sunnyvale Community Services – talked to every unit. Working with 69 households. 56 have moved into a new unit. Los Altos, Mountain View, Cupertino community services helped. Some are still in hotels. SCS still working with all the families.
- We lost 81 low income apartments and it won't be rebuilt as low income apartments.

### **First Needs**

- Shelter - Set-up ¼ miles from the apartment at the Senior Center which is Sunnyvale's primary shelter
- SNY Community Services – Help with needs
- ARC – Help with Shelter and needs
- Animal shelter
- 60+ people needed sheltering for that night

### **Second Needs**

- Prescriptions – Red Cross found that some prescriptions were difficult to replace – not available anywhere, very expensive. Took a while on Friday and Saturday to find everyone who needed medications out of the apartments.
- Determine access to try and get the medications from the apartments. Were able to let some back in to get them.

## **Successes**

### ***Response***

Our Senior Center Shelter had just finished a Red Cross MOU a few months before so the City staff was more aware of what was expected.

Senior Center walk-through with the Red Cross happened before the Super Bowl so Red Cross was familiar with the facility.

### ***Coordination***

Support was overwhelming

Relationships are Key – made coordination easy

### ***Solving problems***

Lots of things happen that you don't put in the plan. But with the right people, you can find solutions.

## **Challenges**

### ***Communication***

Who talks to whom when. Internal issues with not giving everyone the information they need. NIXLE put staff on standby for the weekend. Did not ever tell them to stand down.

### ***Notifications***

PIO – Vinny's boss was the PIO. But Vinny sent out Nixle and tweets.

Vinny became the face of the response. People liked him. He was the spokesperson. Social Media was not used to communicate with them.

Eventually we used email. We had personal contact with everyone. A few took off initially to stay with friends and we did not hear from them for a week.

### ***“Partial” activation***

When you don't think you need everyone. You only have some people. Hard to determine what you need. Because we didn't mobilize/activate certain functions, people didn't think in that way. Just spent time solving problems. No planning & intelligence Big Picture information. Everyone got too busy solving problems.

Vinny kept being asked to do things. Got buried in tactical issues and never really stopped to confirm what was happening and what needed to be done.

### ***Got caught “solving problems”***

Needed to stop, reevaluate & reset. Advance Planning needed.

We got lucky. By being in the middle of the mix at the Senior Center it gave the population the comfort and assurance they needed because they could see the City working. The Big Picture planning could have become a problem because we were caught up with the people.

City Manager decided to rent hotel rooms for the residents for a full week. “It was the right thing to do at that time.” Really reduced the stress on the evacuees. Red Cross did not fund the apartments because they knew it was

going to be more than a few days. City bought themselves some time. Community Services worked with the County to help with funding.

**What would you do differently?**

Would have activated the DOC. Could have grabbed a room near the shelter as the Command Post. Could have brought people together to aid with advance planning and information gathering.

Care and Shelter needs more structure – it became the entire focus of the event but on the Organization Chart it is only one little box. It takes a lot of people.

David Fernandez – This is a huge issue. From a PR standpoint, this is the most important issue and we need to have city staff who can staff shelters and know what to do. We cannot rely on the Red Cross.

David Flamm – Similar incident happened in Santa Barbara. The City didn't help with sheltering. VOAD was not able to help. County had to handle it. This event speaks volumes about how the county/community came together. Vinny was a one person EOC. CADRE came to support. It is a success story.