

Pine Mountain Lake Association Moc Fire Emergency Evacuation Post-Emergency Event Debrief Meeting Report

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SUMMARY:

After an emergency event, the PML management team and staff meet to perform a post-emergency debrief to determine what went well, and what did not go so well, so that we can improve our procedures. For the most part, our response to the emergency went according to plan. Even so, the best laid emergency plans and preparation often do not go as expected and should be reviewed for improvement.

Over the last 50 years our community has been through many fires and multiple community evacuations. The difference between those and the recent Moc Fire is the amount of time we had before the actual mandatory evacuation order came through. Even during the Rim Fire in 2013, there was the initial warning, then the advisory before the final mandatory evacuation order was given.

During the Moc Fire, the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department (TCSO) issued the initial warning and then went right to a mandatory evacuation order within hours instead of days. The reasoning that the TCSO gave for the immediacy of the order was to make sure that Pine Mountain Lake residents had enough time to evacuate. They were concerned that Cal Fire had limited resources and would not be able to wait until our community was under immediate threat before they evacuated the residents.

Additionally, the evacuation routes to egress were limited, and there was a potential that if the entire community tried to all leave at once under threat, traffic flow could bottle neck and stall and it could be disastrous. The de-energization of power lines by PG&E, a few hours prior to the evacuation order made the situation even more challenging for everyone in the area.

REVIEW BY DEPARTMENT:

Department of Safety

During the Moc Fire, our Dept. of Safety staff took action and worked together to carry out their duties prior to leaving to evacuate their own homes and families. Our staff worked with the TCSO by driving street to street in every unit of PML announcing the mandatory evacuation order. It should be noted that some members did not hear the public address systems used by the TCSO and our staff. Many were unaware of the Tuolumne County Everbridge Emergency Notification System (alert text and email) and they were not prepared to evacuate.

Issue: The DOS staff did not have the opportunity to change over the telephone system recorded message at the Main Gate to provide evacuation and other information when calls came in. Our staff was under a mandatory evacuation order and would not be onsite at the Main Gate and it was important to get this message out. We were able to provide multiple notifications through the use of social media, but not every member uses these formats. In the past, the DOS staff were not under the mandatory evacuation order and those who could stay and work, did so.

During the Moc Fire, the Main Gate was overwhelmed with calls for information. A recorded message providing information would have allowed our staff to carry out other duties and direct members to the appropriate emergency information numbers and websites.

Potential Resolve: Upgrade telephone system to allow for quick recorded messaging and to allow staff to field multiple calls as needed. Prepare emergency procedures for use of the new system and train staff on its use.

Issue: The PML staff hand-held and stationary base radio system was not fully functional during the Moc Fire because the power was shut off by PG&E and this affected the radio repeater system.

Potential Resolve: Purchase and install emergency standby generator to ensure the system will remain in use during a power outage.

Issue: The Department of Safety staff usually stays onsite during an evacuation order to assist the TCSO and other emergency services. The TCSO deputies informed our staff that they would have to leave due to the mandatory evacuation order of the Sherriff. There was some confusion as to who were critical emergency personnel, and which PML staff could still continue working to assist during the emergency. We have been able to do this during past fire emergencies.

Potential Resolve: Work with the TCSO and to define critical staffing positions and expectations. This may not be an option if the TCSO is not willing to allow our staff to remain in the area. However, given that there was no immediate threat from the Moc Fire to the PML Community, we believe that our staff should have been allowed to remain. More discussions are required with the TCSO.

Issue: The PML DOS and other staff and management do not have the same radio system as the TCSO and Cal Fire. It was difficult to communicate real-time as all calls had to be relayed through the County OES office or by way of other agencies.

Potential Resolve: Work with TCSO, County OES and Cal Fire to allow PML staff to be added to the County radio distribution list during future emergencies, or work to come up with an alternative method for communication that will work to allow our staff to communicate with

deputies and other County and emergency staff especially during evacuations.

Issue: The Main Gate received calls from the family members of elderly residents requesting or demanding that our staff go over and help their elderly relatives to evacuate. PML does not have the resources or staffing to take on this responsibility. Even if we did, the Association would take on a significant amount of liability if we chose to do so. It should be noted that several agencies provide assistance to the elderly and physically challenged during emergencies and they have staff and volunteers to help these folks evacuate. Many of our residents and staff were unaware of these local agencies, programs and resources.

Potential Resolve: Work with local agencies to provide this information on a quarterly basis to the PML membership, so that elderly members and their families know what to do and who to call if they need help to evacuate during an emergency. DOS and Admin staff should be informed and trained to provide this information when the initial calls come in.

Facilities and Roads Maintenance Department

During the Moc Fire, our Maintenance staff took action and worked together to carry out their duties prior to leaving to evacuate their own homes and families. Critical staff returned to ensure that all buildings, amenities and infrastructure were in a condition to weather the emergency event. Generators were checked and other equipment and facilities were inspected as needed.

Issue: The Maintenance Facility had no power as PG&E cut the power prior to the evacuation. As a result, staff could not use the fuel stations to refill their vehicles and equipment. They had to go to the one gas station that was open in Big Oak Flat to refuel. Additionally, they could not run other equipment as needed within the facility and this hampered their efforts at protecting infrastructure and assets of the Association.

Potential Resolve: Purchase and install generators to adequately power the Maintenance Facility and equipment.

Issue: Maintenance staff members were asked to return to work during the mandatory evacuation to conduct critical infrastructure activities. Asking staff to work during a mandatory evacuation causes potential problems as everyone is under order of the TCSO to leave the area. The County OES indicated that the fire would take at least three days to reach PML (if it were headed straight for us), and there was no immediate risk at that time.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the TCSO deputies informed our staff that they would have to leave due to the mandatory evacuation order of the Sheriff. There was some confusion as to who were critical emergency personnel and which PML staff could still continue working to assist during the emergency. We have been able to do this during past fire emergencies.

Potential Resolve: Work with the TCSO to define critical staffing positions and expectations. This may not be an option if the TCSO is not willing to allow staff to remain in the area. Given

that there was no immediate threat from the Moc Fire to the PML Community, we believe that our staff should have been allowed to remain. More discussions are required with the TCSO.

The Grill

Issue: The Grill building emergency standby generator worked well and kept the refrigeration equipment and freezers running. This generator only services the Grill building upstairs and down in the Golf Pro Shop. The Electric Cart Storage Facility does not have an emergency generator. The Golf Snack Bar is located in this building and we lost a significant amount of food product at this facility.

Potential Resolve: Purchase and install a generator to adequately power the Electric Golf Cart Storage Facility and Golf Snack Bar equipment.

Administration Office--Human Resources

Issue: Coordination and communication with staff was intermittent and not satisfactory due to the nature of the emergency. We used the phone tree or text method of communicating with staff on a management team level. Information was then filtered down by department managers to their staff. Some managers did not have direct employee contact information with them to communicate with their teams during the emergency. Also, we did not have a procedure in place to let staff members know that there was an evacuation and that they should not report to work.

While most managers were able to communicate and contact their staff, there were some missing elements in the system which delayed getting real-time information out to every employee.

Potential Resolve: Investigate the viability and cost of procuring a management/staff VPN program to include texting and email capabilities to communicate with staff on a real-time basis. Consider purchasing software and/or cellphone applications for ease of use and efficiency.

In the meantime, check to ensure that all managers have updated employee contact lists and have each department manager and supervisor enter them into their cellphones to ensure they have employee contact information with them during emergencies. Prepare a plan and policies for direction, assignments and implementation.

Issue: While most staff members utilize direct deposit to receive their biweekly paycheck, some still choose not to participate and they receive a paper payroll check. During the Moc Fire, the Administration staff was evacuated and the paychecks for that pay period had been received and stored in the Admin safe. Unfortunately, the employees who receive paper paychecks saw a delay in receiving their check until the evacuation order was lifted and our staff could return and issue the checks.

Potential Resolve: Continue to inform and offer staff members the option of using direct deposit to receive their paychecks. Communicate this information to staff on a quarterly basis and use the Moc Fire as an example of why it is beneficial to receive their paychecks this way. Provide new hires with the same information and example.

Equestrian Center

Issue: During the Moc Fire, we found that there was no formal, updated plan in place to provide direction and procedures to evacuate the horses that are boarded at the Equestrian Center and no Association equipment to transport them. The Equestrian Center Manager took the initiative to bring in her own truck and trailer and transported the horses to the safe evacuation area at the Sonora Fair Grounds.

Potential Resolve: Update the PML Equestrian Center boarding agreement to include permission and a waiver of liability from horse owners to allow PML staff to evacuate the horses during an emergency. Consider budgeting for and purchasing a horse trailer of sufficient size to transport several horses at one time. Update and fit the Equestrian Center transport truck as needed to accommodate the trailer.

Communicate with boarders in advance of a future emergency to determine who will take responsibility to evacuate their individual horses. Come up with a written plan and policy as to how the horses will be evacuated and assign responsibilities and determine priority. Ensure that the plan includes the horse owners contact list and how, who and when they will be contacted and by whom during an emergency.

Golf Course and Pro Shop

Issue: The Golf Course was not opened due to the Moc Fire evacuation the day after the order was given. Even so, there is currently no formal plan in place to address notification of golf course players who may be out on the Course when and if an evacuation order comes down. These golfers may be unaware of the situation. How do we alert players of the evacuation? Who is responsible for the notification and what method should be used?

Potential Resolve: Prepare a department level emergency preparedness plan to address awareness of a potential emergency and what to do during an evacuation order. Prepare bullet-point cards or informational handouts to provide to golfing members, guests and other customers. Prepare a notification procedure and train staff and assign duties and responsibilities as appropriate.

Golf Maintenance

Issue: PG&E cut the power to the entire area including the Maintenance Yard and Golf Course irrigation pumps. The Golf Course could not be watered for several days and had begun to deteriorate. The Association was at risk of losing turf on the entire Golf Course. Replacing all of the turf and restoring the Golf Course could cost several million dollars and take several months. Insurance does not cover this type of loss.

Potential Resolve: Purchase and install a generator to adequately power the Maintenance Facility and Golf Course irrigation equipment. Reevaluate insurance coverage with broker to see if the carrier will reconsider coverage for this type of loss.

Swim Center

Issue: At the time of the evacuation, staff was unsure what to do during the emergency.

Potential Resolve: Prepare a facility-level emergency evacuation plan and train all staff on what to do during any type of emergency. Ensure that the staff and manager have each other's contact information and assign responsibilities and priorities for emergency response.

Lake and Marina

Issue: How do we shut down the beaches and let members and guests know that they should leave during an emergency?

Potential Resolve: Prepare a facility-level emergency evacuation plan for the Marina and train all staff on what to do during any type of emergency. Ensure that the staff and manager have each other's contact information and assign responsibilities and priorities for emergency response. Purchase or assign any equipment needed for emergency response and communication like hand-held bullhorns (public address systems).

General Issues

Issue: The New Grade was open for emergency evacuation egress for much of the time during the fire, but we did not receive this information from the County. We were mostly relying on updates by text from the County OES director and My Motherlode.com.

Potential resolve: Meet with the County OES and other agencies during their post emergency-action debrief. Provide input and describe specific issues to improve communication for future emergencies.

Issue: Some PMLA members complained that they did not know what to do during this emergency and that they were not informed of, or prepared to evacuate. The PML Emergency Plan that is available on the PML website is very detailed and lengthy. Most members have not read it and key information on emergency preparation was difficult to find.

Potential resolve: Prepare a short booklet or handout for the membership that provides key details and information in an easy-to-understand format. Post and publish emergency preparation information on a quarterly basis in the PML News and on the PML website and social media. Make sure that we communicate expectations with members to help them understand that it is important that they take some personal responsibility to prepare for emergencies.

Conclusion

Overall, the PML Emergency Plan worked and our community members and staff were safely evacuated.

All of our staff members carried out their duties and responsibilities and performed well during a stressful and challenging event. Many stepped up during the emergency and assisted our members and other staff, going above and beyond our expectations.

In our review of the emergency, we found some areas that can be improved in preparation for future incidents. We are already working on addressing some of the issues included in this report and will continue to work on the remainder going forward.