



Dear Hillsborough Neighbors, Hillsborough Neighborhood Network (HNN) Neighborhood Leads (NLs) and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who participated in the HNN Emergency Preparation Exercise on October 22. We had a tremendous turnout with over 50 community members participating. In addition, we all enjoyed the delicious town BBQ!

The exercise organizers have been reviewing all the feedback that we have received about the exercise, and would like to share highlights of this with you.

### **Executive Summary and Next Steps**

The Wildfire and Atmospheric Storm Table-top exercises emphasized the need for situational awareness and strategic thinking in scenarios focusing on decisions of when to evacuate or when to shelter in place.

Several participants requested more specific plans for reacting to such scenarios. The planning team has now recognized the need for specific Action Plans for specific events, and has prepared a Wildfire Action Plan and a Winter Storm Action Plan; an Earthquake Action Plan is also in preparation. These Action Plans are designed to be used with the “What do I do in case of a disaster?” document which provides an overview of priorities and actions needed in an emergency. The Action Plans, derived from vetted FEMA, CalFire or other respected sources provide more detailed considerations specific to the particular emergency.

Overall, these documents emphasize our Take Home Messages:

#### **Take Home Messages**

**“First, know what possible dangers could arise in your area.**

**Second, know what to do for each one of them.**

**And third, don't delay taking action.**

**Those three things will keep you alive”<sup>1</sup>.**

**Know when to evacuate and when to shelter in place; be prepared for both.**

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Faidley, extreme weather photographer, survival expert, and tactical EMT Warren Faidley, in <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/features/how-to-survive-natural-disaster-storm-hurricane-expert-tips/>

### **Goals for Oct. 22, 2017 Exercise:**

In planning the exercise, the team had the following goals:

Hillsborough residents and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members will gain

- Situational awareness,
- Strategic thinking and
- Teamwork responding to a number of emergency scenarios.

Neighborhood teams will improve

- Decision making skills and
- be exposed to a number of communication tools (SMC Alert, Text Messaging, Walkie-Talkies and HAM radios).

Participants will also be introduced to the

- Department Operations Center (DOC) and participate in DOC activities under mock scenarios.

These exercises will serve to

- Improve neighborhood cohesiveness and responsiveness

in order to respond to emergency situations in an effective and efficient manner.

Lessons learned

- An Executive Summary of the Exercise will be published and available to participants – a goal for future training

### **The Table Top Exercises**

The Fire and Atmospheric River Storm scenarios were chosen because they offered two extremes concerning one of the major decisions that residents would have to make in an emergency situation – Do I stay? (Shelter in place) or Do I Go? (Evacuate). There is no “right” answer for all situations; “it all depends”. This is why situational awareness is so important. The answer may change suddenly based on new events or situations. One of the main points in the Fire scenario was the shifting wind. As we have learned from the wine country fires, houses initially considered safe, suddenly had to be evacuated with only minutes to spare. The Storm scenario was focused on sheltering in place, perhaps for days (or as we learned from the hurricane in Puerto Rico, perhaps for months).



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The teams hit on most of the key points although priorities differed across the teams. A few important points were not mentioned or forgotten in the heat of the discussion. In emergency situations we cannot forget the most vulnerable, the infirm or elderly or those with handicaps. Our evacuation plans should include these individuals whether they be family members or next door neighbors. Unfortunately a disproportionate number of such individuals were among the fatalities in the wine country fires.

We also have to include pets in our shelter and evacuation plans.

Appendix 1. (data available upon request) summarizes the team responses to the Fire and Storm scenarios.

### **Participant feedback**

Several respondents mentioned that they thought the session too long; the emphasis should be on the scenarios and the introduction and debrief shortened. One respondent noted that many of us are unprepared and that those who did not attend (including families with small children) likely less prepared.

Appendix 2. (data available upon request) details the participant feedback responses received.

### **Combined Survey results from online and handed in at the event**

Appendix 2. (data available upon request) details the Combined results and data  
Survey Observations:

While most responses were consistent that "The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic." there was more scatter in how respondents felt about "The facilitators kept the exercise on target", "The participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines", and "This exercise allowed me to practice and improve priority capabilities".

We will keep in mind these comments and work to improve these aspects as we plan our next exercise. This was a good learning exercise for us too.

### **Exercise Planning Group feedback**

The planning group has come up with several suggestions for future exercises based on feedback received from participants, CCFD, HPD and HNN:

- Break out groups should be smaller; preferably 7-8 participants per group to allow them to act like a neighborhood team.
- If possible, organize participant groups by HNN Neighborhood.

## HNN Emergency Prep Exercise of Oct. 22: Feedback and Next Steps

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- Facilitators should stand back, guiding groups if they go on tangents, or if some participants are not being heard. Facilitators should allow the participants in the group to organize their own team and their responses, taking suggestions from all participants and then deciding which actions to take, just as they would if they were a neighborhood group dealing with a real emergency.
  - Introduction should be short; participants should be told that they should act as a neighborhood team, choosing a leader, making group decisions and assigning roles and responsibilities, etc.

### **Next Steps**

Based on all the feedback, the planning committee is considering:

Future exercises should be more focused/

Prepare Wildfire Action Plan and Winter Storm Action Plan; an Earthquake Action Plan is also in preparation.

Continue to emphasize the situational awareness and strategic thinking that will be required, along with the information and priorities in the "What do I do in case of a disaster?" and the Action Plans, to help ensure that our Hillsborough neighbors are prepared and able to respond to emergencies. Specifically, all residents of Hillsborough should be familiar with the disasters most likely to occur here (Wildfire, Storms and Earthquakes), know how to prepare and react to each of these, and finally be ready and able to make the decision to evacuate or shelter in place without hesitation when the time comes.

Again, thank you for your participation and we hope that you found these exercises to be useful and informative.

Yours truly,

The HNN Exercise Planning group.