



# County of Sonoma Wildland Fire Evacuation Exercise – 2021 Series

After-Action Report

Saturday, June 19, 2021 – Camp Meeker/Occidental



*Information Kiosk in Camp Meeker*

### Post-Exercise Reminders

#### SoCo Alerts

- Participants who registered for the exercise should note they did not automatically register for SoCo Alert. Registration information that was provided by residents was only used for this evacuation exercise. Participants can register to receive emergency messages online at: [SoCoAlert.com](http://SoCoAlert.com)
- Check to make sure contact information is current and correct. Visit [SoCoAlert.com](http://SoCoAlert.com) to access your account online. You may also call: 866-939-0911, option 2 for help updating your information.
- Save the SoCo Alert phone number as a contact on your cell phone or keep it next to your home landline: 866-419-5000. If you get a call from this number, it's SoCo Alert.
- Only those residents who registered for the exercise were sent an exercise message to the phone number and/or email that was submitted. For the exercise, the general SoCo Alert “emergency” contact database was not used.

#### Evacuation Exercise Meeting Locations

**Destinations of the evacuation exercises are not a standard location for residents to go to during an emergency!**

- The Sebastopol Center for the Arts was used for the evacuation drill only – it is not a identified as a Temporary Evacuation Point (TEP). Be sure to check [SoCoEmergency.com](http://SoCoEmergency.com) when Evacuation Orders are issued for current shelter and TEP locations.
- Shelters and Temporary Evacuation Points have been identified for general emergency planning. However, only those locations that become operational during an emergency will be communicated.
- As part of personal emergency plans, residents should identify the place (or two) they will go to during an evacuation.

#### Know Your Zone

- Residents are encouraged to visit [SoCoEmergency.org](http://SoCoEmergency.org) to find their evacuation zone number. Evacuation Orders and Evacuation Warnings will generally be issued by zone by local public safety officials.

## Overview – Camp Meeker & Occidental Evacuation Exercise

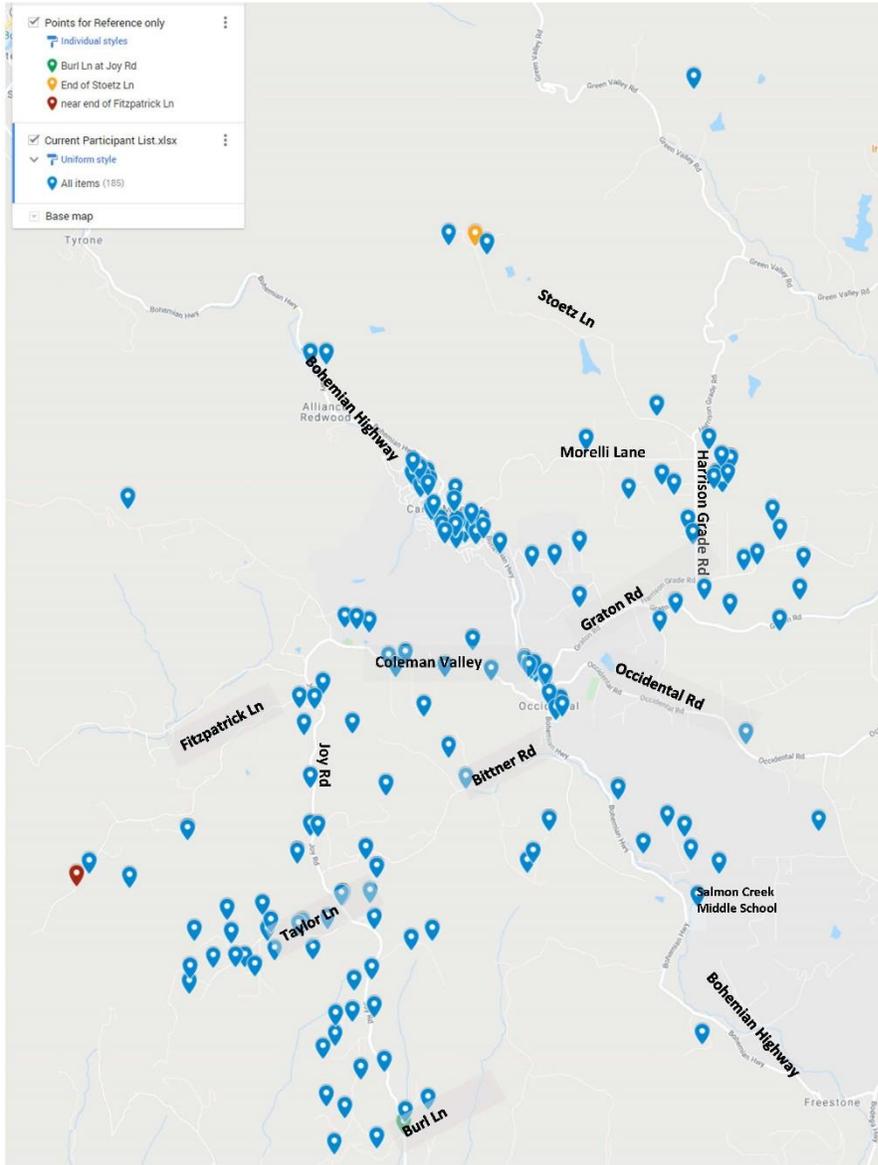
The Camp Meeker and Occidental Exercise was a collaborative effort between DEM, Fire Safe Camp Meeker, Fire Safe Occidental, and numerous local community groups and public safety agencies. Exercise planning started in early April and continued through the date of the exercise, Saturday, June 19. The area of focus for the evacuation exercise was along the Bohemian Highway between Camp Meeker proper and Occidental, extending to include area main roads: Coleman Valley Road, Joy Road, Graton Road and Occidental Road.

The end meeting location for participating residents was designated as the Sebastopol Center for the Arts (SCA). This location provided a one-way looped parking lot that could facilitate a drive-thru survey distribution and collection operation due to the current pandemic. The location was approximately a 25 minute drive for residents which provided some travel distance for an evacuation drill. It was also next to Ives Park which was ultimately used as an area for residents to gather and receive additional preparedness information materials.

Sheriff Deputies, and County Regional Parks Rangers in newly outfitted vehicles, canvassed the area and used the Hi-Lo sirens for alerting. This provided a more realistic evacuation operation as residents could experience how the Hi-Lo siren could sound in their area. The Occidental Fire Department also used the evacuation exercise as an opportunity to use their station siren system that would be used to alert local Occidental residents in an emergency.

The map below shows how participant registration was distributed throughout the Camp Meeker and Occidental communities.

Additionally, informational “kiosk” locations were established in both communities. Volunteer staffers provided residents and passersby with evacuation drill information and were available to answer questions related to the exercise.



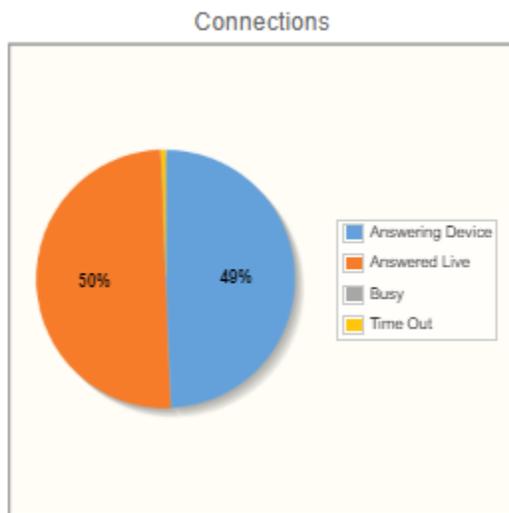
## Evacuation Exercise Summary – Camp Meeker & Occidental

At the close of the registration window, Thursday, June 17 at 5 PM, there were a total of 188 registrations. On the day of the exercise, there was a count of 144 vehicles that had processed through the SCA. This number did not include those who parked along the curbside near the SCA. An approximate number of participating residents, based on survey responses indicates that over 200 people participated in the evacuation exercise.

At Ives Park, the following agencies and organizations were available to answer resident questions and provide additional preparedness materials:

- HALTER Project
- American Red Cross
- Sonoma County Human Services Department
- Sonoma County Sheriff's Office
- Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management
- Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, Board Chair

The SoCo Alert message was sent at 9 AM on Saturday, June 19. This message was sent to those who had registered prior to the Thursday deadline – separate from the “emergency” database. Call connection results from the SoCo Alert system shows a nearly 50-50 split between calls being answered live or via an answering device.



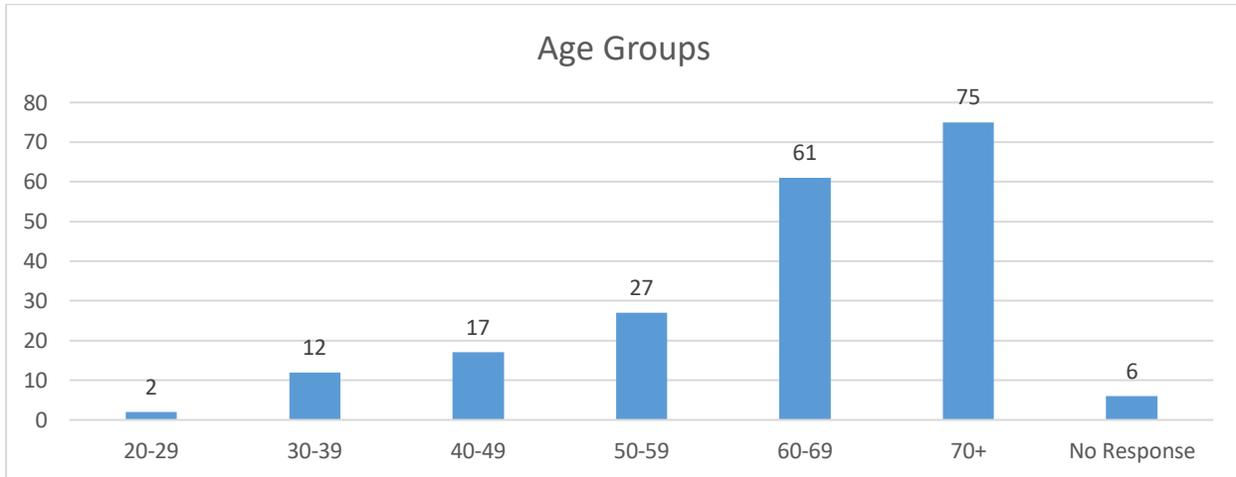
By 9:25 AM, the first vehicles were arriving in Sebastopol. Traffic control and management was supported by Sonoma County Regional Parks and volunteers from the Fire Safe groups.

In the Ives Park booth area, DEM provided information about SoCo Alert, handed out Evac Packs, and residents were able to take home a case of MREs (meals ready to eat). The Sheriff's Office was able to distribute over 70 evacuation tags to residents. HALTER Project gave residents information about animal preparedness. County Human Services provided information about Temporary Evacuation Points (TEPs) and let residents know what to expect at a TEP during an evacuation.

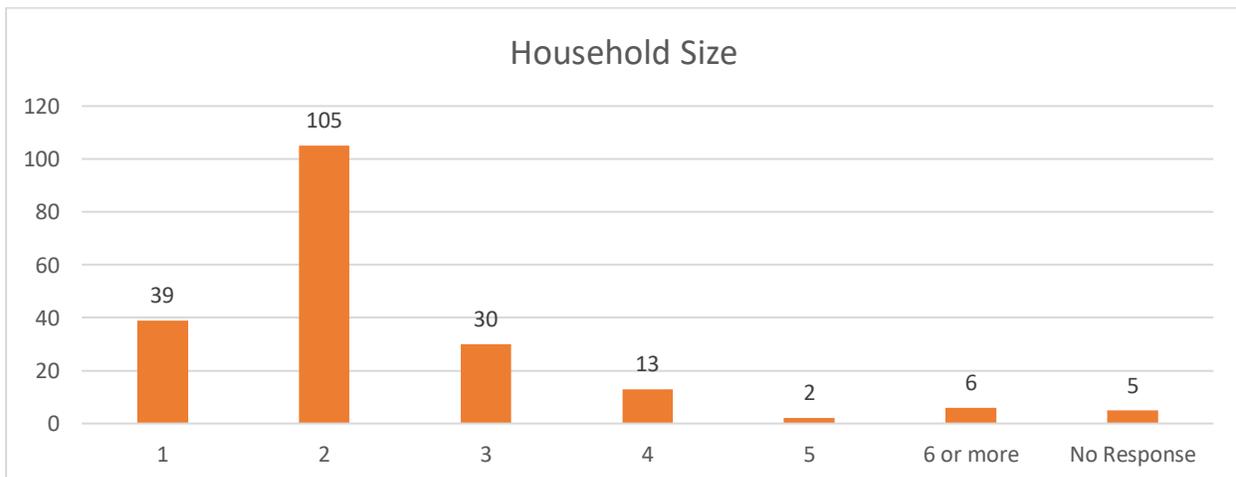
## Survey Feedback and Results – Camp Meeker & Occidental

The survey was provided in paper form and included a link to an online version of the survey. A total of 237 responses were recorded between the online version and the paper version, 170 and 67 respectively. 37 responses did not have answers recorded to any of the survey questions. Possible reasons include a click or visit to the online survey site but did not purposefully answer questions or the respondent did not submit the answers at the end of the survey. These responses have been omitted as they don't provide quantifiable information.

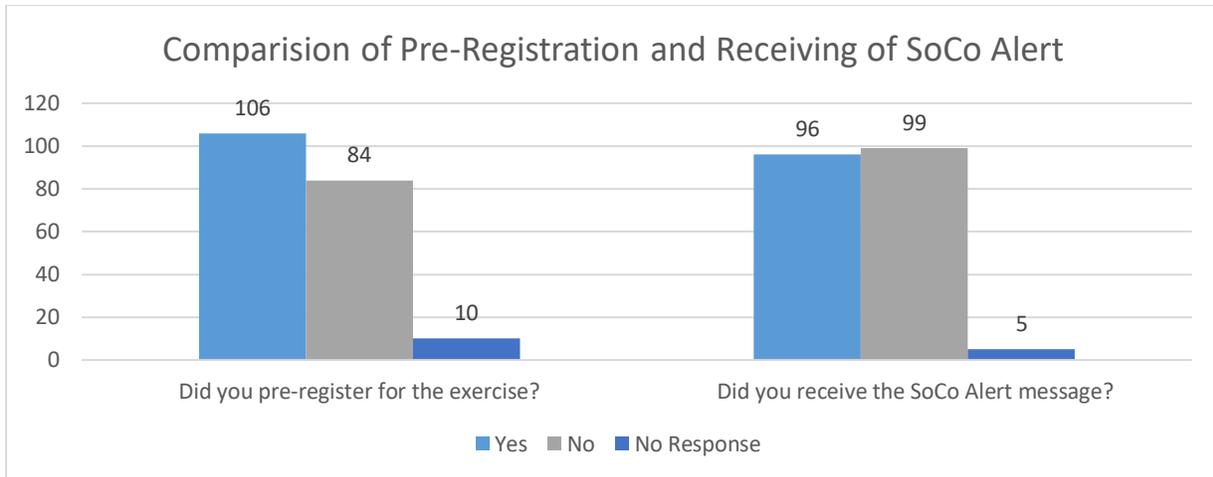
A majority of the participants were over the age of 60, based on the survey responses.



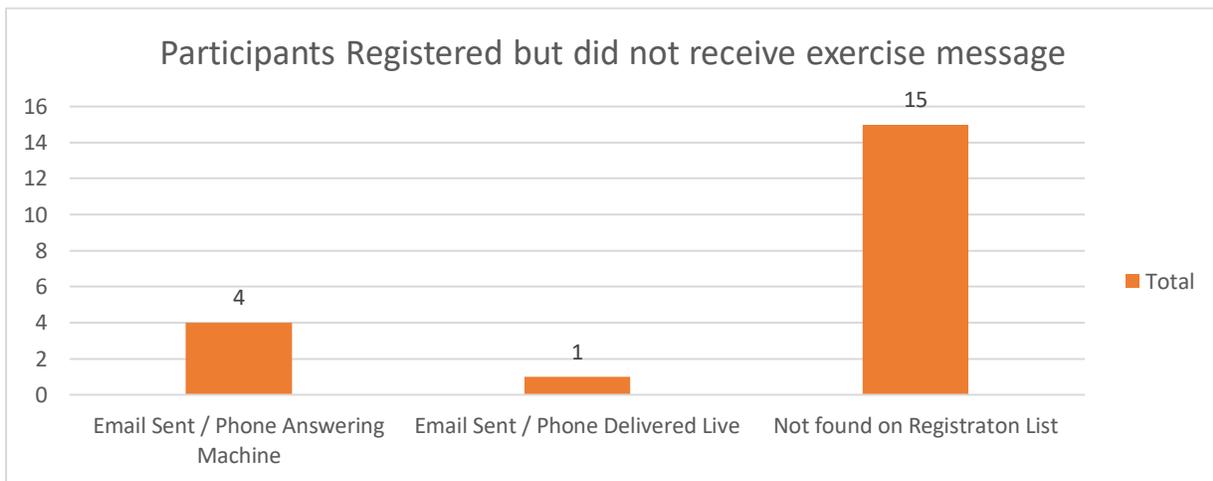
Additionally, an overwhelming majority of responses indicated a 2-person household.



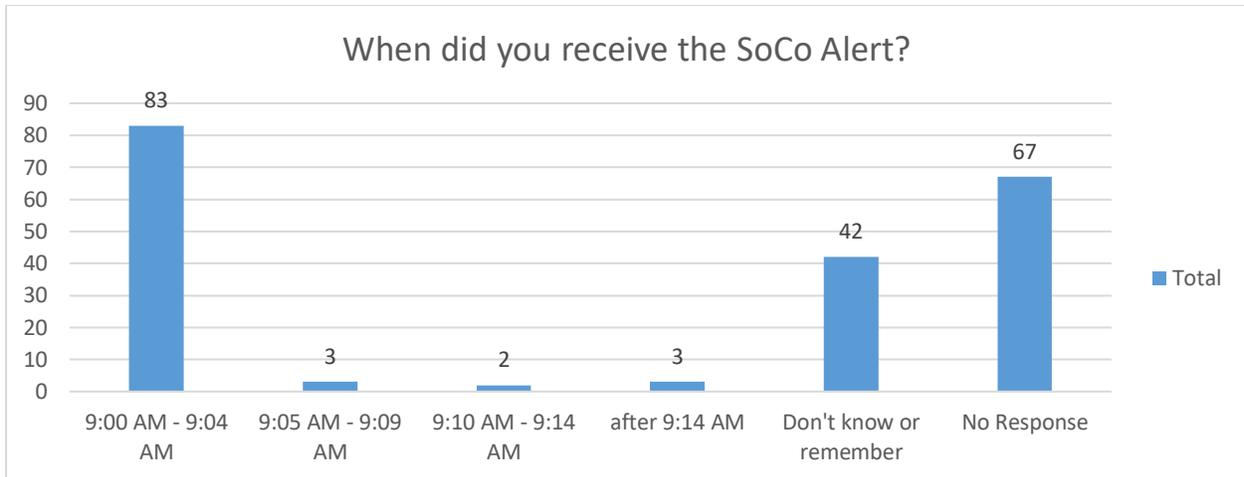
There was a mixed response between those who indicated registering for the exercise and not receiving the message that was sent via the SoCo Alert system. Pre-registration for the exercise was necessary for residents to receive the exercise alert as the SoCo Alert “emergency” contact database was not used.



In drilling down into the responses, 20 of them were found that indicated pre-registration for the exercise and still not receiving the alert. In cross-checking each record, 75% were not found on the registration list through the contact information provided. The remaining 5 were found to be on the registration list and the SoCo Alert system showed positive contact. It is unknown if residents marked this in error on the survey or if in fact, they did not receive the alert.

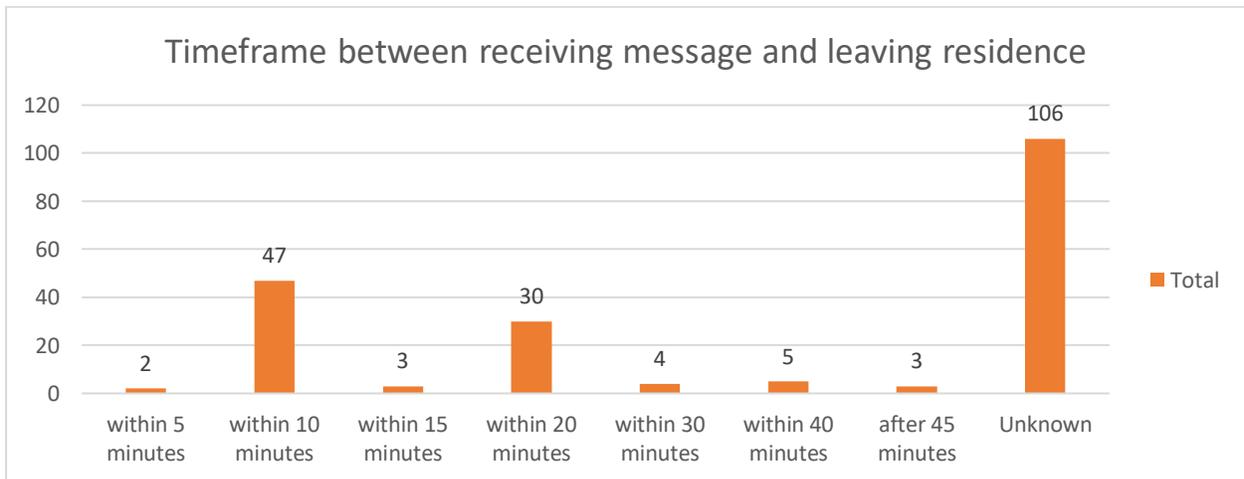


The exercise message was sent via the SoCo Alert system to residents who had registered. This message was sent at 9 AM on the exercise date. Of those who responded to the question, a majority indicated receiving the message between 9:00 AM and 9:04 AM.



The responses were analyzed to determine the length of time between receiving the exercise message and when the participant left their residence. Those that did not have a response to either question were counted as Unknown. However, those who marked “Don’t know or remember” when answering when they received the alert were counted if they provided a time reference of when they left their home. The assumption is that the resident received the alert at some point prior to leaving.

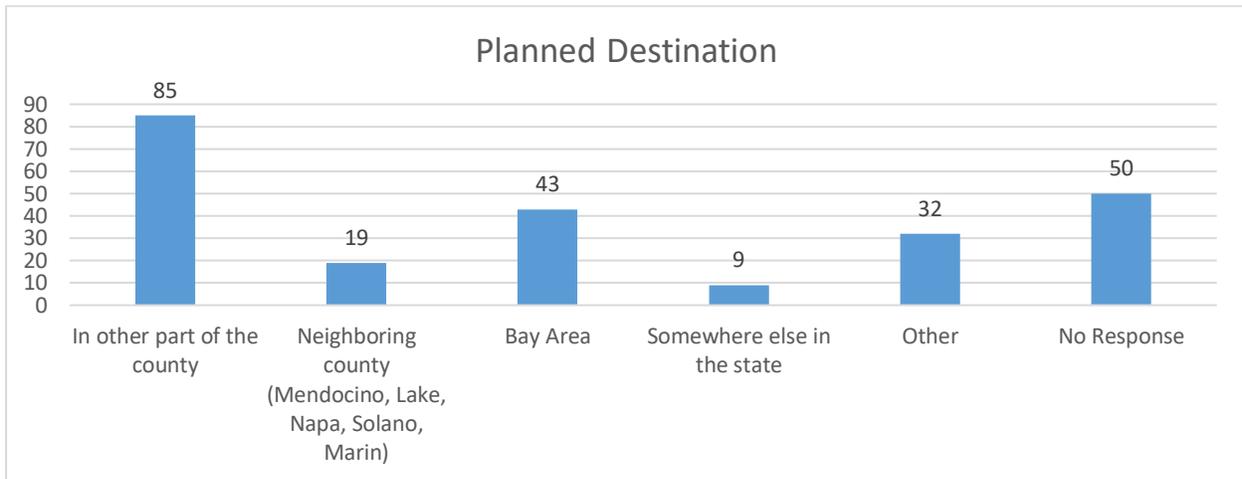
Of the 94 results counted, over 50 % left within 10 minutes of receiving the message.



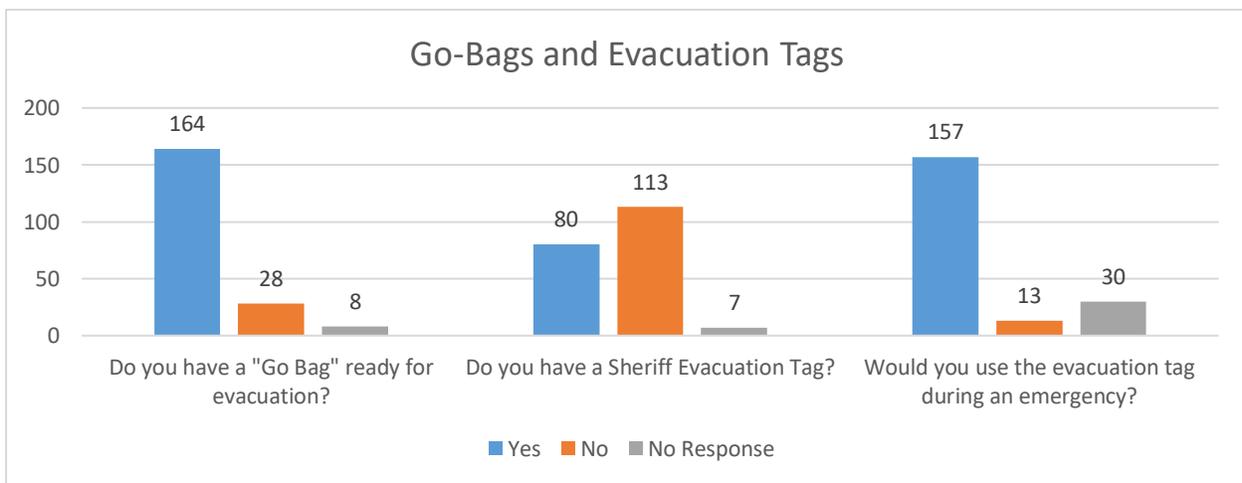
A majority of responses showed that the evacuation exercise was “Somewhat” or “Very” valuable. Multiple comments made to this question were related to the SoCo Alert message; the Hi-Lo or Fire Station siren; and the overall evacuation process. The word cloud below the chart shows the words that repeated 10 or more times in the comment boxes.



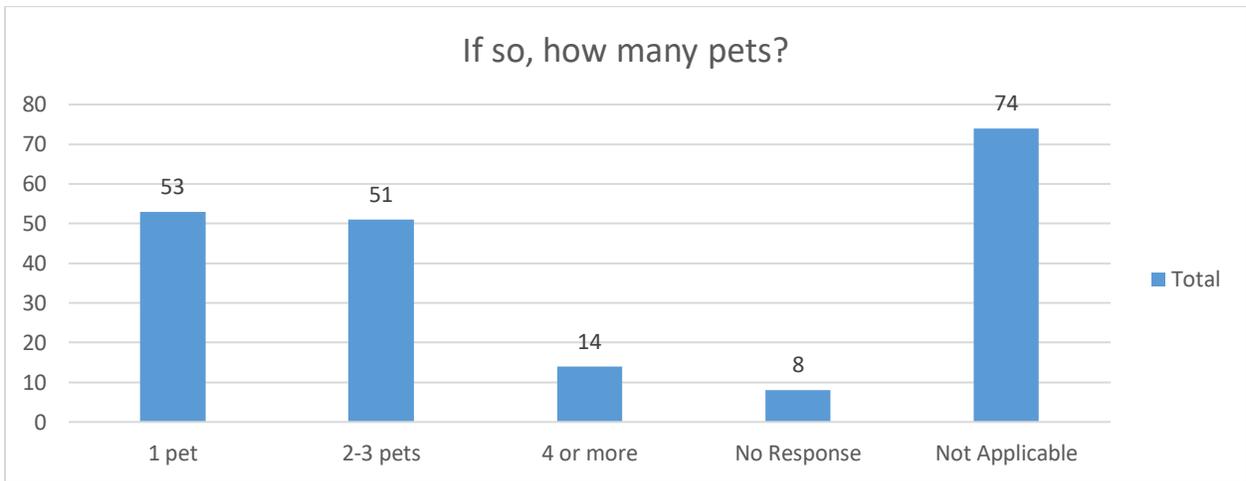
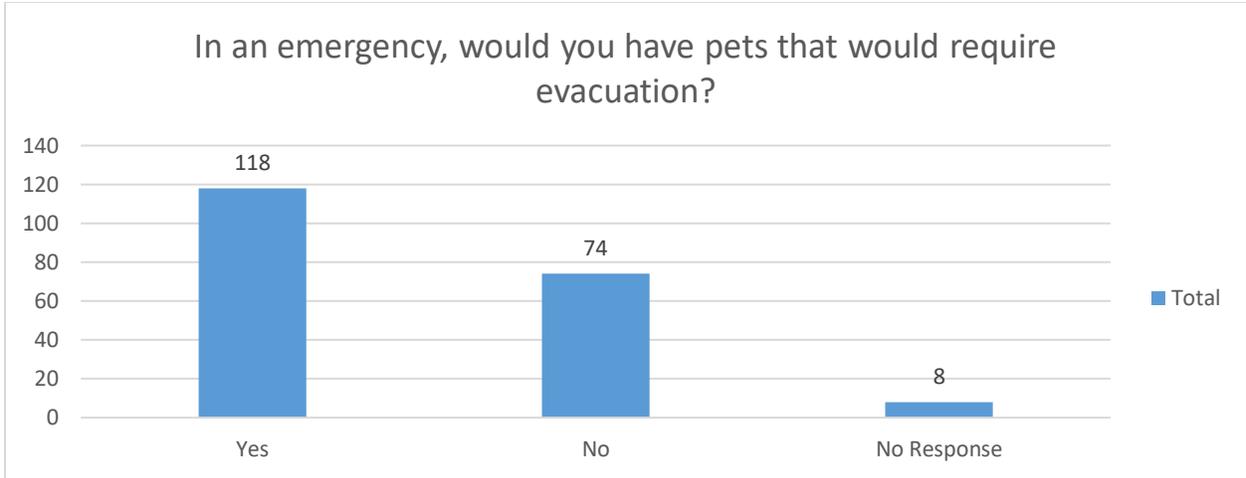
Based on the responses, when evacuated, residents plan on going somewhere within the county or stay in the Bay Area region.



Many residents in the community are prepared with at least a Go-Bag. An overwhelming majority of the survey responses, 164 out of 200, responded that they have a Go-Bag ready for an evacuation. However, not many indicated they have an “evacuated” tag from the Sheriff’s Office. It is important to note that the community has its own version of an evacuation tag that has been circulated to residents. Even though they did not put up their evacuation tag during the evacuation exercise, many residents indicated that they would use an evacuation tag during an emergency.



A number of residents (118 out of 200 responses) indicated that they would have at least one pet they would need to evacuate during an emergency. Some would have two or three pets that would need to be evacuated.



## Lessons Learned

There were a number of lessons learned during this exercise. They are categorized into the following categories: communications, siren alerting, and end point locations.

### Communications

Capability	AI?	Lesson Learned	Note/Corrective Action	Primary Responsible Organization
Registration		Having a cutoff date for registration allowed plenty of time for list download and entry to notification system.	By closing the registration form to the Thursday before the exercise, staff was able to upload the contact list to the notification system and conduct follow-up on errors identified (phone number and/or emails) with residents	DEM / County ISD
Registration	AI	Online registration form needs to emphasize that pre-registration is required in order to receive the alert message	Add language on the registration form about where to sign-up for SoCo Alert emergency messages	DEM / County ISD
SoCo Alert		The SoCo Alert system worked to send out the exercise message to registered participants.	System reported 50% answered the call live with the other having an answering device. Similar results with the number residents who received alert within 5 minutes	DEM
SoCo Alert	AI	There was confusion from residents who did not register but participated in that they expected a SoCo Alert.	Public messaging should refrain from saying that residents will receive a SoCo Alert as the public “emergency” contact list is not the list that is used	DEM / County PIO
Mailers		Postcards contained drill information and instruction for pre-registration.	Postcard designs were consistent between both evacuation exercises while containing specific exercise information.	DEM / County PIO
Mailers	AI	Not all addresses were mail-deliverable to the address causing some residences to be missed in the drill area.	Consider using additional mailing avenues to reach those addresses who result with non-deliverable addresses – such as USPS Every Door Direct Mail	County PIO

AI stands for Area for Improvement. Notes/Corrective Action should be considered for future evacuation planning.

Capability	AI?	Lesson Learned	Note/Corrective Action	Primary Responsible Organization
Surveys		Many responses were submitted via survey.	200 responses were received between online and paper submissions	DEM
Surveys	AI	Not enough printed surveys were available	Spanish versions of survey used to give to participants the QR code to the online survey.	DEM
Information Kiosks		Kiosks were effective in providing information about the drill	Over 20 individuals came up to the information kiosks between the two locations (CM and Occidental); the informational packet was informative about the drill	DEM

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Siren Alerting

Capability	AI?	Lesson Learned	Note/Corrective Action	Primary Responsible Organization
HI-LOs		Sheriff’s Office and Regional Parks worked well together in coordinating the alerting area breakdown	With the number of available resources, units were able to conduct more thorough alerting with the sirens in the exercise area	Sheriff’s Office / Regional Parks
HI-LOs		Multiple announcements were made via vehicle PA system	Using Hi-Lo siren along with verbal announcement (in exercise or of emergency) can help information public	DEM / County ISD
HI-LOs	AI	Audible level not heard by some residents	Various factors impact how loud siren is heard (siren placement, house location from road, speed of patrol vehicle, etc.). It is critical to also be aware and use other alerting methods/capabilities.	Sheriff’s Office / Regional Parks / DEM
Occidental Fire Siren		The siren system was operational and sounded as intended	Occidental Fire Dept. activated their fire station siren as another method of alerting the community of evacuation.	Occidental Fire
Occidental Fire Siren	AI	The siren was not audible to many residents	The siren broadcasts to a steady sound which did not attract attention and becomes ambient noise; OFD is in process of changing the siren to a different tone	Occidental Fire

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End Point Location

Capability	AI?	Lesson Learned	Note/Corrective Action	Primary Responsible Organization
Ives Park Booths		Having a booth area participants to go to adds to overall event	Setup and booth placement was well-organized	DEM / All
Sebastopol Center for the Arts	AI	Parking lot was not large enough for number of participants	The parking lot had about 80 parking stalls compared to the number of registered participants (188)	DEM
Sebastopol Center for the Arts	AI	Location is not identified as a shelter or TEP in general planning	Use locations that are identified in general planning for evacuation drill purposes – emphasis that the location is not a default location for evacuation	DEM

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