

Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow AFTER-ACTION REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Incident Period:
December 4, 2017 through January 31, 2018

After-Action Meeting
September 20, 2018





Katie Freeman

Project Manager

- ◆ Led efforts to collect and analyze information specific to the response to the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow
- ◆ Previously led development of the 2015 Refugio Oil Spill After-Action Report

Process Overview

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Information Gathering – Review EOC Documentation

- ◆ April 2 to May 4, 2018

Focus Group Meetings

- ◆ Management Section
- ◆ Logistics, Operations, and Finance Sections
- ◆ Planning Section and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Unit
- ◆ Law Enforcement and Fire Stakeholders (Operations)
- ◆ Public Health, Behavior Wellness, and Mass Care Stakeholders (Operations)
- ◆ Public Information and the JIC (Management)
- ◆ Partner Agencies (All Sections)

One-on-One Meetings

- ◆ Ongoing

Initial Review

- ◆ Early July 2018
- ◆ Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management

Secondary Review

- ◆ Early August 2018
- ◆ Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management
- ◆ County Executive Office

Stakeholder Review

- ◆ September 19, 2018 to October 3, 2018

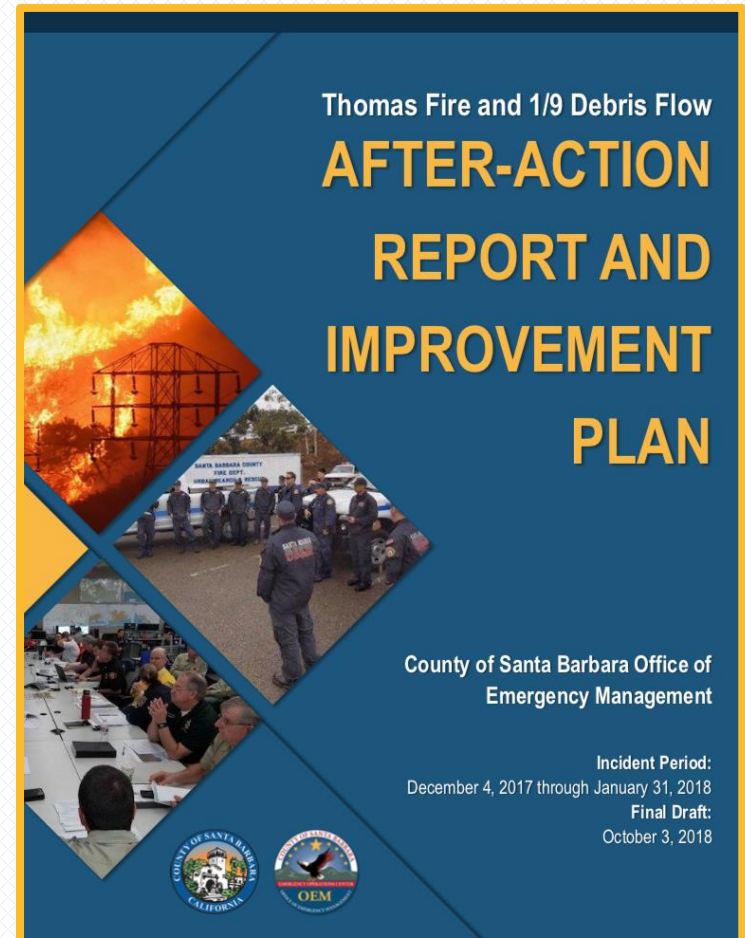
Board of Supervisors Presentation

- ◆ October 2018

After-Action Report Organization

Report Organization

1. Handling Instructions
2. Executive Summary
3. Description of Data Sources
4. Function Evaluation
5. After-Action Report Questionnaire
6. Additional Questions
7. Appendix A: Improvement Plan
8. Appendix B: Acronyms and Abbreviations



Function Evaluation

- ◆ Presents assessment with each Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) / National Incident Management System (NIMS) Function in alignment with templates provided by the State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services.
- ◆ Organized by the primary sections in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC):
 - Management Section
 - Operations Section
 - Planning/Intelligence Section
 - Logistics Section
 - Finance/Administration Section
- ◆ Observations are aligned with the following areas:
 - Planning
 - Training
 - Personnel
 - Equipment
 - Facilities

Strengths, Considerations, and Discussion



Robust information sharing through the County Joint Information Center (JIC).

- ◆ The County worked to ensure timely dissemination of information through the JIC across multiple communication channels, including comprehensive translation into Spanish. For the Thomas Fire alone, the JIC issued 440 informational updates via the County website in both English and Spanish and provided content to local news for them to provide 24-hour coverage. From December 6 to December 26, 2018, approximately 575,000 users viewed the website 2.2 million times, resulting in the County's website being continually ranked in the top five worldwide information sources on the Thomas Fire by Google.



Provision of relevant and timely mapping products public and operational use.

- ◆ The County was able to develop mapping products early in the Thomas Fire to support communication to the general public regarding the evacuation areas. Through use of internal, mutual aid, and contract support, the County was able to evolve use of mapping products over time to support emergency public information and operational decision-making within the EOC. The evacuation map developed to communicate with the general public for the Thomas Fire has received 5,539,539 views since it was launched; views on the ArcGIS evacuation map currently used by the County totals 279,044.



Use of a call center to support public safety and increase situational awareness.

- ◆ The call center was originally set up to provide contact for people who were being evacuated and needed immediate assistance, usually because they did not have transportation. Over time, the call center became a valuable source of information for community members, with more than 8,500 calls and texts to the call center occurring in December 2017 and more than 7,600 in January 2018. Co-locating the call center in the EOC facilitated the dissemination of information from the community to stakeholders while also increasing situational awareness within the overall EOC.



Timely planning executed to support contingency operations as the incident evolved.

- ◆ As the disaster evolved from recovery from the Thomas Fire to potential response associated with a debris flow, the County executed timely planning and preparedness activities to support response. This includes both clearance of debris basins and development of a 72-hour plan associated with a potential debris flow. Additional planning included plans and procedures to support internal EOC operations (e.g. “JIC Dissemination List”) and field-based response operations (e.g. *Critical Personnel Transportation Plan*).



Use of volunteers to support response operations.

- ◆ Volunteer and mutual aid assets were used to great effect during response and recovery. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Listos, and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs) staff are a valuable resource, supporting evacuation shelters, local assistance centers, the call center, and disaster recovery centers (DRCs) (among others).



Implementation of County-wide Behavioral Wellness response.

- ◆ Behavioral Wellness support was provided at multiple locations across the County, including at evacuation centers; the LAC/DRC; and within the EOC. To support the overall need for support, Behavioral Wellness developed the Community Wellness Team to guide mental health, spiritual, and emotional wellness resources in response to both the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow. The Community Wellness Team is comprised of 13 organizational providers and offers a full continuum of care, including immediate crisis response, short term counseling, and long-term counseling. As reported through April 9, 2018, 5,800 mental health contacts were made related to both the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow.



Execution of a robust Public Health response.

- ◆ Public Health Emergency Declarations were appropriately made along with Air Quality Warnings, in coordination with APCD, during response operations. Public Health was also engaged in the EOC; supporting animal evacuation and care; executing ocean water testing; hazardous materials removal; distribution of masks; provision of triage at evacuation sites; medical staff and equipment in shelters, and within LAC/DRC; supporting transportation for and sheltering for individuals in licensed care facilities; and supporting transportation for individuals unable to evacuate independently and for essential medical personnel.



Formalize and socialize evacuation planning.

- ◆ To support execution of this consideration, recommendations include assembling the decision-making process for debris flow evacuations into one document; continuing efforts to standardize evacuation terminology across the Operational Area and with adjoining counties; and providing annual training on evacuation terminology so it is understood by first responders.



Continue to refine and enhance emergency public information and warning.

- ◆ To support execution of this consideration, recommendations include establishing ReadySBC as an authoritative source of public information for emergency public information; streamlining public information procedures to ensure rapid and timely release of information from the JIC; and continuing planning efforts to support information dissemination across multiple communications platforms with considerations for accessibility for non-English speaking populations and individuals with disabilities or others with access and functional needs.



Increase collaboration with local government partners.

- ◆ To support execution of this consideration, recommendations include pre-disaster collaboration with local emergency managers to develop a mutual understanding of needs and ensuring local personnel are embedded as a Liaison position within the EOC.



Enhance the County's ability to respond to a sustained EOC activation.

- ◆ To support execution of this consideration, recommendations include continuing to promote the SEMS and NIMS training for all disaster service workers in alignment with County-developed guidance; consideration methods to provide just-in-time training and orientation to personnel supporting the EOC and JIC; and equipping the EOC so it is prepared to provide care and sheltering to disaster service workers during sustained EOC activations.



Increase the County's capability to recover from a major disaster.

- ◆ To support execution of this consideration, recommendations include appointing a Recovery Unit Leader early in the incident; developing pre-disaster recovery plans, including consideration for cost recovery and debris management; and pre-identifying and assessing sites across the County which can be used to support both evacuation shelters and local assistance center (LAC)/DRC.

Questions and Answers

Key Contacts

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