Practice Makes Perfect for County Staff during Office of Emergency Services Exercise

“The Monterey Peninsula is hit by a major earthquake on September 23rd.”

Fortunately that did not really happen, but it could. A quake was the premise of an emergency exercise for county employees on the 23rd, a nearly 4 hour drill which tested the county’s internal and external communications.

Initially, the drill was the brainchild of the City and Presidio of Monterey, but it quickly evolved into a multi-agency drill, including Monterey County, since the County’s Emergency Operations Center would normally be called in to such an emergency if this was the ‘real thing.’

Nearly 100 county employees participated in the exercise in two shifts, getting mock emergency ‘call-ins.’ While the peninsula entities went through their exercise in handling such a catastrophic event, county emergency workers would receive “injects,” information as to what would be occurring in those scenarios and then handle the information as if it was a real emergency.

Emergency Services Planner Sidney Reade says the drill was a real plus for staff, and gave emergency planners the opportunity to identify where to focus future training efforts and it strengthened the county’s capabilities and relationships with its community partners.
“Everyone came away learning something new from the drill and it helped employees to stay familiar with the positions they fill during an emergency,” says Reade.

County workers can expect another chance at this type of practice next month. In October, a statewide earth preparedness drill, “The Great California Shake Out” will take place on the 20th and Monterey County will participate.

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**Library Foundation Holds Annual Fundraising Event**

The Foundation for Monterey County Free Libraries held its 17th Annual Author’s Dinner on September 17th at the Hyatt Regency in Monterey.

This year’s event featured best-selling author and Paralympics skier Josh Sundquist. Sundquist, who has been featured on CNN, USA TODAY, and NPR, wowed the crowd with his upbeat but heart warming stories of being diagnosed with cancer and losing a leg at the young age of nine, and how he joined the US Paralympics skiing team through sheer determination. His memoir “Just Don't Fall” was a national bestseller.

At this annual event, the Library Foundation also recognizes a member of the community for outstanding support of the Foundation and library service to the community. This year’s honoree was Gail Delorey, who is also on the boards of Rancho Cielo Youth Campus and the Community Foundation of Monterey County. She has served on the board of the Library Foundation since 1994 in a variety of capacities, including Treasurer for two years, Vice President for three years and President for ten years. She has been involved with every Author’s Dinner event since 1995, when the guest speaker was renowned mystery writer Tony Hillerman. Under her leadership, the Foundation has granted over $2.5 million to Monterey County Free Libraries.

County Librarian Jayanti Addleman thanked the Foundation and members of the audience for their support. “You put the ‘magic’ in our library magic wands,” she said, talking of people who come to the library.

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Gail Delorey, President, Foundation for Monterey County Free Libraries (left) and author/athlete Josh Sundquist (right).
library in these difficult economic times expecting to find a fairy tale ending to their stories.

The Author’s Dinner was a resounding success. Along with many other movers and shakers from our community, seen in the audience were Supervisor Louis Calcagno, 2nd District and wife Carol, Director of Emergency Communications Lynn Diebold, and 4th District Board Aide Wendy Askew.

Planning Department Sets Efficiency, Customer Service Goals

The Resource Management Agency-Planning Department is always looking for ways to work more efficiently and provide the best possible customer service. Over the next fiscal year, the department will be implementing some changes to various processes.

“One of the first tasks involves planning staff working to improve the usefulness of Accela, the permit tracking database,” explains Laura Lawrence, Planning Services Manager. “We’re in the process of creating new reports that expand parcel information for front counter customers, staff reports, and for the Performance Measurement System in response to the Board of Supervisors’ Strategic Plan Initiatives and Objectives. We will also be creating and implementing automated Build-Out Tracking Systems over the next two fiscal years as part of the General Plan Implementation.”

The planning team is also improving the efficiency of some of day-to-day functions that will, in turn, improve service to both internal and external customers.

- By the end of the fiscal year, an online application process through Accela should be in place for minor permits
- To decrease the processing time for minor permits, a simplified resolution is being created
- To reduce the number of legal documents that applicants must record after a permit is approved, the idea of a single document - the permit resolution - which would include all of the information required is being investigated with County Counsel staff
- Coordinating the recheck of construction permit plans with the Building Services Department

With the Board of Supervisors leading the way, the Planning Department is striving to move away from paper and toward electronic-only staff reports and electronic submittal of application materials.