

## Published October 23rd, 2013 Great Shake-Out Teaches New Lessons By Sophie Braccini



This year's Great California Shake-Out, conducted within the three Lamorinda communities Oct. 17, had a different scenario than last year: what challenges arise after the first 48 hours of a major earthquake.

The three Emergency Operations Centers of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda as well as the Saint Mary's College EOC, the Orinda School District and Miramonte and Campolindo high schools participated. Dennis Rein, Lamorinda emergency preparedness coordinator, had given all participants a detailed scenario. At 10:17 a.m. last Thursday everyone at the EOCs dropped, covered, and held, then continued as if 48 hours had passed, organizing their resources to respond as well as possible to reports of problems coming to them. Initially, this involved testing the communication between radios at the different centers. Difficulties were identified immediately, such as one school that could not connect, and outdated contact lists. "Overall, things went well," said Janet Keeter, the Orinda city manager and incident commander. "It became very clear though that sustaining the rescue and organization with our limited staff would quickly become very difficult."

Orinda staff drop, cover, and hold at the EOC. Photo Sophie Braccini

Orinda's EOC is located in the City Hall building that is

fully equipped and built to sustain a large magnitude earthquake. Lafayette's EOC is located in the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Community Room that was built with emergencies in mind, and includes an automatic generator and a kitchen. The biggest challenge in Moraga is that there is no permanent EOC and it took staff an hour to set one up at Fire Station 42.

The three incident commanders, Keeter, Lafayette's city manager Steven Falk and Jill Keimach, Moraga's town manager, confirmed that if a disaster were to hit Lamorinda, after a few days the EOC would be consolidated into one location to be able to sustain the rescue operations. "By doing so we would have three people for each position," noted Falk. He said that conversation on that topic would continue between the three cities.

Saint Mary's College also reported good results. "The usual people who staff our EOC were not on campus that day," says Adan Tejada, the college's director of public safety, "so this was good practice and it went well." Tejada indicated that Saint Mary's would be open to discussing different possibilities, including a consolidated EOC.



Miramonte students evacuate buildings through a narrow gate during participation in the Great California Shake-Out Oct. 17. Photo Andy Scheck

Reach the reporter at: <a>sophie@lamorindaweekly.com</a>

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