

Log of Emergency Response Operations

[The following Santa Cruz City log covers the first 22 hours after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake. It was originally published in the City of Santa Cruz's "City Quake Report; a special report to Santa Cruz City employees." December 1989 pp.2-3.]

Tuesday, October 17, 5:04PM, 15-second earthquake!

5:05PM:

[Note: Times are only approximate. Initials stand for the individual making the entry, followed by their department.]

(E.E.—Fire) Contacted all fire, police, water and public works radio channels and took control of the city. Within minutes of the earthquake, we were already thinking about potential "second disasters"—possible failure of Loch Lomond Dam, a major gas line rupture and potential sparking and fires. Immediately requested conditions of natural gas mains, the dam, water lines, and main traffic arteries (for rescue response purposes). Called for all assigned staff to open the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at Fire Station #2.

(W.P.—Fire) Removed trucks to the outside of fire stations. Major area of Pacific Garden Mall was managed by regular staff. Dispatched fire engines for quick survey of downtown area. Based on prior surveys from the building department, we knew downtown would be the most hazardous area. Saw heavy column of smoke from south of Laurel and dispatched one engine there.

(J.F.—Public Works) Saw puffs of smoke from Laurel Street area and huge dust clouds in the Mall area. Some people were still in the office. I grabbed all the engineers and dispatched them to start inspecting bridges. Headed with McKinney to the EOC; traffic was already blocking streets.

(J.M.—Police) I was flagged down by a woman who told me a man was trapped inside the corner house on Myrtle. Most of the house had collapsed and was off its foundation. I was only able to enter by breaking out the bathroom window. An invalid, elderly man in his eighties was trapped inside. I pushed him through the open window to Officers B. and H.

(T.R.—Police) I saw flames coming from Myrtle Street and when I arrived the house that was burning had collapsed with the porch caving in. People were screaming that a woman was trapped inside that there was a gas leak. The back kitchen door was jammed, but I managed to kick it in. A woman in her seventies was pinned behind a refrigerator. The house was so badly damaged that the floor was up in the air at an angle. The refrigerator had slid across the floor and had pinned her against the wall. I managed to get her out and lay her down on the front lawn and her neighbors came to her aid.

(R.L.—Fire) One engine company was dispatched from the Mall to Myrtle Street. Report of 2 victims trapped in house, fire was gas fed. With damaged water supply, gas fed fire and only 1 engine company, no entry could be made. We were

lucky because it turned out that no one was inside. Entire area was permeated with the smell of gas. 20-30 citizens reported major damage; many citizens assisted us with evacuation, gas shut-offs, and fire control.

(L.R.—Purchasing/Logistics) We ordered as many security people as possible from Pacific Security. One person began within 10 minutes. By 8:00PM, 14 people were on duty at the Mall. By October 18, an additional 20 were on board providing around the clock security at the Mall.

5:35PM:

(W.P.—Fire) We walked Pacific Avenue to assess the extent of damage and number of possibly trapped people to determine where aid would be sent. I could see the collapse of the interior of Ford's from where we set up command at Cathcart and Pacific.

(M.M.—Fire) Went up the Mall checking on collapse buildings and sizing up any rescue efforts that would I needed. Many citizens were already feverishly working with one another on rescue efforts. I alerted them on the unsafe areas and went on down the mall with a bullhorn warning the people scattered about looking shocked that the area was highly unsafe and to clear out. The Pipeline store was collapsed.

(E.E.—Fire) Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the Soquel Avenue fire station was in operation with phone lines working and two staff members.

(J.F.—Public Works) Public Works crews dispatched to check roadways for emergency vehicles and to patrol neighborhoods to shut off gas services.

(P.B.—Fire) City fire engines responded to hundreds of calls within the first few hours dispatched through the County 911 system. Fire and police dispatched to quadrants in city to survey for and respond to major building collapse and rescue.

(B.K.—Water) Water crews were dispatched to repair main water lines to areas of the city to ready for any fire fighting needs. R.H.'s voice answered at Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant phone in his very welcomed usual calm cadence.

5:40PM: Major 5.8 aftershock!

(M.M.—Fire) I had just finished warning people who were helping with searching Ford's about what to do in an aftershock (what places to stay away from, where not to go, etc.) and it hit. Most of the falling rubble was down from the initial earthquake, but more bricks and debris fell in the large aftershocks.

(W.P.—Fire) We were anticipating major fires and were just inordinately lucky that the electric power was knocked out. Sparks from frayed wires within the Pacific Mall would have caused major fires.

(B.C.—Parks/Lifeguard) Working under Capt. S., the lifeguards were assigned to search and rescue teams. We went ahead of the dog team searched every building along the Mall from top to bottom.

6:15PM:

M (E.E.—Fire) Within one hour of the quake, without notification, virtually 100% of all fire, police, public works and water crews had reported back to work. EOC was fully operational with staff at each station: incident command, logistics, shelter, fire, police. We sent runners out to check on the families of all our emergency staff so they could continue working without worry.

(M.D.—Police) Officers on site crawled through all the voids in the debris at Coffee Roasting Company. Officers Y. and J. did find a live person and one fatality on the 2nd floor of the building. City lifeguards helped in the removal of the victims.

(M.M.—Fire) When I got to Coffee Roasting Company, police were already checking it. I ran into a building engineer from Granite Construction on the way up the Mall and pulled him along with me to get an opinion on the stability of the Coffee Roasting building in terms of making rescue as safe as possible if needed. There were about 20 people already forming human chains lifting out debris. An employee of Coffee Roasting Company had not turned up outside and was considered trapped.

6:40PM:

(E.E.—Fire).Report that there was a rupture of main gas line at Market and Hubbard. Requested immediate conditions of water service for fire fighting. Dispatched fire engine to scene. Tried to contact PG&E with no success. We were extremely lucky that nothing ignited the gas line area — a major fire would have crippled us.

(M.D.—Police) Police arrived prior to PG&E at the major gas pipeline leak. Officer Z. took control, evacuating a five-block radius and positioning officers on the perimeter until PG&E was able to secure the gas leak.

6:54PM:

(P.B.—Fire) Pacific Operations requested site of temporary morgue. It was to be Emeline County Building.

7:00PM

(E.E.—Fire) Local mutual aid strike team arrived with 3 engines from Scotts Valley and Central Fire District (Aptos) to be dispatched as needed.

(M.J.—Public Works) About 7:15PM we closed the Riverside Bridge. Barricades were up by around 8:00PM. Soon after we closed Murray Street Bridge.

9:18PM:

Engine 3112 responded to woman in labor at Beach and Riverside.

10:00PM:

(J.F.—Public Works) With J.B.—Police and E.E.—Fire, determined we would need major help to inspect the city. City manager approved the request and put in a call to the state Office of Emergency Services (OES) and requested 80 to 100 engineers. Held our first EOC status meeting of all EOC staff, department directors, Mayor and City Council members who were present. We held meetings every 8 hours thereafter until Sunday, Oct. 22.

(Police) [Officers] S. and L.'s dogs went through during the evening and didn't "alert" for anyone alive under the debris.

(W.P.—Fire) By midnight or early morning we had completed a primary search of all buildings on the mall and had begun a more detailed secondary search.

Day 2: October 18, 1989

3:00AM:

M (P.B.—Fire) First OES fire strike team arrives from Sonoma County with 5 engines.

2:00—4:00AM Engineers in Southern California receive calls at their homes from the state OES to report to Anaheim field for flight to Santa Cruz.

8:30AM:

(W.P.—Fire) Pacific Operations Command Post (PAC OPS) established at Cathcart and Pacific. Sonoma strike team reported for duty with heavy rescue equipment. We requested lumber from Logistics for shoring.

9:00AM:

(W.P.—Fire) Requested search dogs for more thorough secondary search of all collapsed building areas. U.S. Border Patrol dogs were the first on the scene.

9:05AM:

M (P.B.—Fire) Sent 5 volunteers to Riverside Bridge to keep traffic and people off the structurally-damaged bridge. Barricades that had been put up the night before were being ignored.

10:00AM:

OES building engineers/inspectors arrive from Southern California by helicopter at Watsonville and transported to Santa Cruz by Santa Cruz Metro Transit District.

11:20AM:

(P.B.—Fire) Requested information on number of missing persons reported.

11:59AM:

PG&E reports that Market and Hubbard gas main pipeline now safe.

About noon:

(W.P.—Fire) Search dogs arrive.

12:10PM:

(P.B.—Fire) Pacific Operations asks how to close off air space over the Pacific Avenue so helicopters do not set up dangerous vibrations hampering rescue operations. California Highway Patrol assigned a chopper to patrol the area.

1:30PM–2:30PM:

Request to Logistics for housing 45 firefighters. More barricade tape needed. Porta-Potty needed at PAC OPS.

Afternoon:

(W.P.—Fire) California Conservation Crews begin to work alongside City Public Works crews in cleaning up and removing debris along Pacific Avenue. They also assisted in clearing out debris in search operations.

2:33PM:

M (P.B.—Fire) Asked who had fuel.

(D.H.—Central Maintenance) No fuel at the City Corporation Yard, all tanks were down. Fuel was available at County Yard on Ocean and at Sabeks on Fern St.

(J.B.—Police) One gasoline station owner on Mission Street was only allowing City, County, and emergency vehicles to use the pumps at his station.

3:22PM:

(W.P.—Fire) Requested four engines from Scotts Valley and one more building engineer to command post.

Sources

- *[See top of article.]*

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