30-Day Post-Fire Overview

December 8, 2003
Introduction

- San Diego County began suffering from the largest wildfires in state history on Saturday, October 25, 2003
- The Cedar fire burned 280,278 acres countywide
- In the City of San Diego, the Cedar fire:
  - Burned 28,676 acres
  - Destroyed 335 structures
  - Damaged 71 structures
Fire-Rescue Department

- **What we did right...**
  - Protected 672 housing units in Tierrasanta and 950 units in Scripps Ranch
    - Estimated value of $515 million
  - Ceased filling out-of-county strike team requests to ensure full staffing
  - Called staff in to repair fire engines at the Repair Facility
  - Put reserve and training apparatus into service
Fire-Rescue

- Recalled off-duty personnel to staff reserve apparatus
- Officially requested the Fire-Rescue helicopter to return to San Diego on October 26
- Organized 11 Damage Assessment Teams to document damaged and destroyed property in a timely manner
- Kept the public informed
Fire-Rescue

- What we did wrong and changes needed...
  - Establish DOC earlier in the incident
  - Did not have a plan or basic supplies to establish, activate and run a Damage Assessment Center, so developed our own team and program
  - Insufficient fire officers for Incident Command requirements
  - Structure triage needs to be improved
Fire-Rescue

- Lack of personnel to establish safety officers on the fire ground
- Communications Center security plan was not enforced
- No multi-casualty vehicles in the system
- Personnel taken to the fire via bus were not documented when assigned to apparatus
- Better utilization of media news reports to monitor the fire activity
Fire-Rescue

- *Changes needed in City’s fire codes...*
  - Review and enhance construction standards
    - Non-combustible roofs
    - Boxed-under eaves
    - Double-pane windows
  - In urban interface areas, consider:
    - One-hour rated construction for exterior walls
    - Prohibition of combustible construction in close proximity to homes
Fire-Rescue

- Minimum 100-foot brush thinning from structures
- Provide City staff for Brush Management Program
- Discuss issues county-wide
- Increase focus on fire prevention education
  - Evacuation preparation
  - Improving home fire safety
Fire-Rescue

- Force composition changes needed...
  - Insufficient staff in all divisions
  - Enhance Brush Management Program
  - Insufficient numbers of trained Safety Officers
  - Addition of Firefighter-Paramedics to all truck companies
  - Funding of an aggressive Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program
Fire-Rescue

- Fire Accreditation process underway, to be complete in February 2005
  - Initial estimates to bring department to 1979 levels of service based on population growth:
    - 21 new support staff positions
    - 11 new engine companies
    - 3 truck companies
    - 2 additional battalions
Fire-Rescue

- Additional equipment needed...
  - Enclosed cabs for all front-line and reserve apparatus
  - A regional Fire-Rescue helicopter program
    - A county-wide study is underway to identify program needs
  - Multi-casualty apparatus
  - Two additional reserve apparatus
  - Equipment to completely outfit all reserve apparatus, including radio equipment
Fire-Rescue

- Field web gear and fire shelters for all firefighters
- Sufficient quantities of radios, batteries, and chargers
- Protective foam application systems
- An alert system to notify residents throughout the City
Fire-Rescue

- Appropriate vehicles for fire ground commanders and battalion chiefs
- Tools for the DOC to perform necessary functions required of medium to large scale incidents
- A strong training program needs to be put into place to produce effective and knowledgeable personnel at all levels
Fire-Rescue

- *Changes needed to mutual aid system...*
  - Developing a concept for Automatic Aid
    - All cities, fire districts and unincorporated areas should work toward proper staffing levels to ensure adequate support of mutual aid needs during significant emergencies in the county
  - Pursuing agreements with local military resources
Fire-Rescue Summary

- Largest wildfire in California state history
- 32 fires occurring throughout the state simultaneously
- In excess of 750,000 acres burning
- With the resources, staff did an outstanding job
- No loss of life or significant injury to civilians or personnel in the City of San Diego
Fire rages on the east side of the I-15 at Clairemont Mesa Blvd
Police Department

- *What we did right...*
  - Evacuated areas of Scripps Ranch, Tierrasanta and San Carlos:
    - 18,162 homes
    - 53,570 approximate population
  - Officers quickly deployed to perform mandatory evacuations and secure the neighborhoods
  - Department coordination to obtain needed support, equipment, food and supplies was excellent
Police

- Timely activation of the department DOC, establishment of Incident Command Posts in the affected areas and a timely callback of department personnel
- Specialized Police units including Air Support, Horse Mounted Unit, and the Motor Squad were effectively utilized
Police

- **What we did wrong and changes needed...**
  - Dust masks were not readily available, but were obtained quickly; a cache is now in place
  - Civilian support units not immediately notified during the initial phase of the incident
  - Police paging was delayed because Fire-Rescue Department pages have priority in the system
  - Communication between agencies and disciplines needs to improve
Police

- *Force composition changes needed…*
  - A personnel management software program to more effectively staff incidents

- *Additional equipment needed…*
  - State-of-the-art equipment for the DOC
  - Two Command Post vehicles for commanding an incident for a sustained period of time
  - Upgraded onboard communications equipment for Air Support helicopters
Police

- **Changes needed in mutual aid system...**
  - No changes recommended
  - Law Enforcement mutual aid system is in place by Government Code through the state via established protocols
  - In the future, should consider whether impending disaster could impact our own jurisdiction as it expands

- **Summary...**
Report Summary

- High-level, 30-Day Overview of internal actions, in response to October 28 Mayor memo and November 3 Council direction
- Numerous additional follow up reports to be presented in January and February
- Local, as well as regional and statewide, efforts are underway to identify resources and improvements needed
Report Summary

What we did right...

- The Emergency Operations Center was activated and staffed at Level II
- Water Department staff ensured there was enough water and adequate water pressure throughout the emergency
- Emergency generator service came on-line as designed at the City’s communications sites to avert communication failure
- Emergency evacuation centers were established at Mira Mesa High School, Balboa Park and the stadium in conjunction with the Red Cross
Operational staff fought fires, assisted with traffic control, cut firebreaks, wet down areas, and moved equipment to protect City assets.

The San Diego Local Assistance Center was established in Scripps Ranch to provide a one-stop location for citizens to access available disaster assistance programs and services.
Report Summary

- *What we did wrong and changes needed...*
  - EOC notification guidelines need to be modified to ensure timely notification of key City staff by the public safety Communication Centers
  - Accurate information concerning the boundaries of the fire and resource deployment was not readily available to the EOC
  - Earlier notification of the Water Department would have provided for anticipation of system adjustments needed to optimize water delivery to critical service areas
Report Summary

- Coordination of information disseminated on the web page, cable channel and Citizen Access Phone System needs to be improved.
- Procurement and implementation of an information management application for the City and County EOCs and DOCs is underway.
  - GIS workstation in the EOC for mapping functions
  - The ability to capture and view video transmissions from a mobile unit in the field
Report Summary

- **Fire Resistant Roofs:**
  - Staff is developing proposed new building code regulations to improve fire resistance of structures:
    - Class A roofing that is effective against severe fire test exposures and provides a high degree of fire protection to roof deck Citywide
    - Ban on all wood shake or wood shingle new or replacement roofs Citywide
    - Continue to require non-combustible Class A roofing materials in high hazard areas
Report Summary

- **Fire Resistant Roofs cont.**
  - Other changes considered for structures:
    - Exterior fire-rated walls
    - Protection of exterior openings
    - Boxed eaves
    - Restrictions on the use of exposed wood siding or exposed wood structures
  - Proposed regulations in December; to Board of Building Appeals and City Council in January
Report Summary

- **Brush Management:**
  - Existing regulations in effect for brush management zones around new and existing structures
  - Zones revised in January 2000
    - No permit required if brush management performed in accordance with the Municipal Code.
  - A review of Brush Management Program policy and regulations, jointly with other agencies, will be conducted
  - Regulations should be modified to remove inconsistencies, clarify, and educate the public
Report Summary

- Brush Management cont.
  - Park and Recreation has inadequate staff for brush management along City-owned open space
  - City departments are working together to ensure a consistent message is conveyed to the public
    - Currently finalizing a brochure
  - A Brush Management report will be presented in January
Cost Update

- Initial costs of Cedar fire estimated to be $16.0 million
  - Initial costs for Fire-Rescue, Police and other approximately $3.0 million
    - Personnel
    - Activation and support of EOC
    - Fuel for emergency vehicles
    - Paramedic services during the fires

- Replacement cost estimates for structural damage to Reservoir Keeper residences and equipment loss at El Capitan Reservoir and San Vincente Dam $800,000
Cost Update

- **Short and long-term recovery effort costs estimated to be $12.2 million**
  - **Short-term:**
    - Removal of ash, debris, dead trees, and brush
    - Scripps Ranch Local Assistance Center
    - Replacement of traffic signs and damaged equipment
  - **Long-Term:**
    - Mitigation of possible flooding and erosion control
    - Brush management throughout City’s open space areas
Cost Update

Impact of fires on City revenues estimated to be $3.0 million due to:

- Waived permitting fees for fire victims
- Cancellation of Chargers Monday Night Football game
  - Pursuing compensation via business interruption insurance
- Cancellation of tee times at Torrey Pines and Balboa Park golf courses
- Cancellation of activities at Park and Recreation facilities
- Preliminary estimates of loss of property tax may amount to approximately $300,000
Cost Update

- City will continue to meet with representatives from the State’s Office of Emergency Services and FEMA in the coming weeks to review costs and determine what is eligible for reimbursement.

- City will be exploring options for alternative funding, such as grants.
Follow Up

- PS&NS discussing Fire-Rescue needs at December 10 meeting
- County-wide study of aerial firefighting needs – Phase 1, December 2003
- Assessment to comprehensively identify public safety resources needed Citywide – early 2004
- Comprehensive review of all department needs conducted and presented during upcoming budget process
Follow Up

- Building and fire code change recommendations – January 2004
- Brush Management report – January 2004
- Financial impact of fires – February 2004
- Emergency Operations Center report – February 2004
- Long-Term: Fire Accreditation process – February 2005
Follow Up

- Regional: Fire Prevention and Emergency Preparedness Task Force
- Statewide: Blue Ribbon Commission


Summary

- Given the resources, size and unique nature of the Cedar fire, City staff in all areas did an outstanding job in protecting and serving the public.
- The public’s cooperation and willingness to work with City staff during and after the fire is greatly appreciated.
- The Mayor and City Council were very supportive and provided leadership in a very difficult time.
- The teamwork exhibited by the entire community saved lives and property.
- Moving forward with implementation of improvements needed to do an even better job in the future.