



Perris News

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Earthquake Preparation Drill

Perris took part in a major earthquake preparation drill Thursday to find out how the City would react when a massive temblor rocked Southern California from the Salton Sea to the Pacific Coast.

Each city along the path of destruction created its own individual scenario and set up the emergency response system to cope with the devastation.

In Perris, the earthquake damaged City Hall, caused some injuries and fatalities there and damaged several schools. About 25 City employees from various departments responded to the Emergency Operations Center at the Senior Center to confront the aftermath.

Community Services Manager Walt Carter ran the scenario.

City Manager Richard Belmudez served as Emergency Operations Coordinator, just like he would do in the event of a real disaster. Other departments included Finance, Administration, Internet Technology, Development Services and Public Works also took part.

The Perris Police Department, Perris Union High School District and Perris Elementary School District also sent representatives.

More than 580,000 Riverside County residents in schools, businesses and homes tested their response to the catastrophic earthquake in one of the largest simulated disaster drills on record.

In Riverside, mock patients were evacuated from a fourth-floor window at Riverside County Regional Medical Center. Every school district in Riverside County practiced how to drop, cover and hold. The earthquake preparedness drill was part of the Great Southern California Shakeout, which simulates the impact of a magnitude 7.8 earthquake.

The disaster scenario was based on an earthquake that began in Riverside County near Salton Sea, causing mass destruction as it rumbled through the San Andreas Fault.

Perris activated its Emergency Operations Center about 30 minutes after the quake struck. A team of first responders set up the computers and set up the communications links to the outside world. As the scenario unfolded, more and more people came to the EOC, taking calls from field representatives who phoned in reports of damage and keeping tabs of the fluid situation. They would perform the exact same tasks in a real emergency.

According to the scenario, the main temblor and a 6.5 magnitude aftershock left City Hall damaged and caused several injuries and two fatalities. Six kindergarten students and a teacher were hurt at Enchanted Hills and the quake damaged Sky View Elementary School.

Five other students were hurt at Perris High School and were being treated in a triage area set up on the football field. A temporary City Hall was set up in the senior center to keep the public abreast of the latest developments and provide emergency contact information.

Perris' simulated emergency lasted about two hours. Carter pronounced the drill a success. He noted that representatives from every department took part in the mock-up, asking questions and offering suggestions about how to improve the City's response. Some suggestions—take pictures, note the time of every reported emergency to the minute and purchase a large-scale map of the City to help pinpoint damage and speed the response of rescue workers.

"I think it came out great," Carter said. "It's vital to be as prepared as possible."



Public Works Manager Daryl Hartwill briefs participants at the conclusion of the emergency drill



Community Services Manager Walt Carter, who led the City's response during the recent earthquake drill, confers with Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin (left) and City Manager Richard Belmudez.

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