

Emergency Preparedness Committee

Bel Air Ridge Clubhouse - 2760 Claray

Wednesday, September 9, 2015 7 pm

Present

Chuck Maginnis

Gary Plotkin

Maureen Smith

Andre Stojka

Leslie Stojka

Danielle Cohen

Joan Herman

Alina Vartany

Dr. Phil & Donna Larson

Michael Schlenker

Irene Sandler

Hildreth Simmons

Cathy Palmer

Affiliation/Title

Bel Air Resident, BABCNC Safety Chair

Bel Air Resident, BABCNC Immediate Past President

Bel Air Resident, BABCNC Board member

Bel Air Ridge Resident, BABCNC Board member

Bel Air Ridge Resident, EPAC

Bel Air Ridge Resident, EPAC

Bel Air Ridge Resident, EPAC

Bel Air Park Resident

Bel Air Park Residents, EP Enthusiasts

Bel Air Crest Resident

Bel Air Crest Resident, BABCNC Board member

Residents of Beverly Glen Secretary & EP Committee

BABCNC Administrator & Transcriber

Special Guest Speakers

Grayce Liu, General Manager, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE)

Bill Hopkins, Granada Hills NC EP Chair & Southern California Preparedness Foundation

Linda Pruett, Lake Balboa NC EP Chair

Beth Burnham, Topanga Resident, Founder/Co-President North Topanga Canyon Fire Safe Council (NTCFSC)

Bryce Anderson, Topanga Resident, T-CEP, Disaster Radio Team

James Grasso, Topanga Resident, T-CEP, Disaster Radio Team

Introduction of Attendees:

1. **Call to order:** EP Chair, Chuck Maginnis, called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

2. **Roll call introduction of attendees**

3. **Approval of Minutes – July 15, 2015:** Maureen Smith moved; Michael Schlenker seconded, and the minutes were approved.

4. **Neighborhood Councils Communicating**

Grayce Liu, DONE General Manager, was introduced by Chuck and stated that she came to discuss communications between neighborhood councils regarding emergency preparedness, and to that end, she invited and introduced to this group two NC Emergency Preparedness leaders, Bill Hopkins from Granada Hills North NC and Linda Pruett Lake Balboa NC.

Grayce reported that she has spoken with CD4 Councilmember David Ryu, whose goal it is to do a series of workshops on specifically hillside issues with special focus on flooding, landslides and earthquakes.

Below, DONE GM Grayce Liu, third from left bottom, waits to address a question while (from bottom left) Donna Larson, Michael Schlenker, Grayce Liu, Danielle Cohen, Joan Herman, Maureen Smith, Cathy Palmer, Hildreth Simmons, Beth Burnham, Bryce Anderson, James Grasso, Andre Stojka, Leslie Stojka and Alina Vartany listen.



She related that some of the 96 NCs have EP plans, and some do not; they are encouraging NCs to have EP Committees. Her goal with the LAFD and Emergency Management Department is to try to put them together with neighborhood councils so there could be a “systemic city-wide response, and that everyone has a plan for their neighborhood.”

Grayce noted that there are roadblocks in the City for allocating funds, but as they at DONE are our advocates in the City, she would like to help to make City resources for purchases available for NCs. Currently NCs are not allowed to purchase emergency bins for various reasons including but not limited to liability and whether materials in the bins are being updated, etc.

Gary Plotkin suggested that since different sections of the city have different issues, that they be grouped accordingly, e.g., those dealing with flooding in North Hollywood, with fires and landslides in the hillside communities, etc. Grayce agreed and she noted that some NCs are part of DONE’s “Sustainability Alliance” which is also working on various issues.

Grayce then introduced Linda Pruett and Bill Hopkins to speak on their efforts and encouraged this group to work with them.

Linda Pruett, President Emeritus and EP Chair, Lake Balboa NC, www.LakeBalboaNC.org
Email: textmgt@att.net Phone: 818-345-9809.

Below, Bill Hopkins (standing) and Linda Pruett (to Bill's right) take turns sharing their respective NC achievements while Leslie Stojka, Alina Vartany, and Gary Plotkin listen.



Linda stated that she started their EP committee 10 years ago. They meet monthly, have speakers, presentations, demonstrations, classes, etc. to interest people in getting more prepared on various types of disasters. Eight years ago they started working on EP fairs. The next EP Fair is on October 3.

Their **ham radio club meets every Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m., on the air (145.570 Simplex)**, where they practice their skills and test their equipment throughout the Valley; sometimes people check in from the other side of the hill, as far as south as San Pedro.

She noted that they had purchased two steel cargo bins, using an entire year's NC budget of \$60,000 and filled mostly with kits for use by Fire Department, Police Department, Medical Professionals, CERT individuals, as they predict that in a big disaster they would all quickly run out of supplies. One was placed at a park property across the street from Woodley Lakes Golf Course, and the other at an elementary school property. She stated that they would be happy "to be a template for other NCs so they don't have to reinvent the wheel." She and Bill would like to share what they have learned with us. Call, email and come out and visit!

William (Bill) Hopkins, Granada Hills North NC EP Chair & President of the Southern California Preparedness Foundation, a 501(c)(3) promoting disaster awareness, education & preparedness) www.socalprep.us Email: Bill.hopkins@socalprep.us Phone: 818-835-5384.

Bill explained how it took several years to raise interest for their EP committee, but it now is attracting more people than do their regular board meetings.

Bill explained the **next Valley Disaster Preparedness Fair (8th Annual EP Fair) to be held Saturday, October 3, 2015 • 10:00 am - 2:00 pm @ Fire Station 87 • 10124 Balboa Blvd. Granada Hills, 91344.** www.valleydisasterfair.com info@valleydisasterfair.com

Bill presented a fair sheet, which can be found on the website. At 11:00 a.m., there will be a licensing session at the fair, where you can prepare without paying anything for ham radio licensing. This event will include representatives of 10+ NCs participating in the outreach booth, or walking up and down and sharing info. They now have online registration. Everything is free at the fair through NC funding and contributions. You'll get a kit with EP advice and info for families. They expect to have over 900 kits, and lunch from 11:30 to 1:30 cooked on spot by Calvary Church in Burbank.

Bill stated that though we have different concerns to work on, we can work on them together. He stated that his NC EP Committee gets a lot of coverage. In addition to the fair, they have "grab & go" kits and various sheets including home security and checklists including nuclear safety. They typically provide an EP item of the month to Board meetings to build up an EP kit, such as an ACE wrap, bandages, eyeglass repair kits, which are useful and raise awareness.

Their foundation also works on the **Map Your Neighborhood (MYN)** program. They will come to your house to map eight to ten houses for 2-1/2 hours for free. It is a very local program.

Dr. Larson asked who funds Lake Balboa's NC activities. Linda replied that they operate under rules such as the Brown Act of California, so they're not allowed to accept donations. However, they have to be creative. A realtor offered to pay half of a printing project and their NC paid for the other half. For "clean ups" of city streets, they ask Starbucks to contribute coffee, etc. She noted that Grayce is working on this for them. She noted that this NC system is the biggest in the country. Bill stated that they have three nonprofit organizations to help support the So. Cal. Disaster Preparedness Center, the Map Your Neighborhood Program & the City CERT program. Bill encouraged everyone to come to their EP Fair. Grayce, Linda & Bill were applauded by the group for their informative discussions.

5. Communications Subcommittee Update

Michael Schlenker: Chuck introduced Michael, who spoke on what this subcommittee is doing with "radio to radio" communications: getting communities in communication with each other. Some HOAs have them and some do not. They reached out to the ham radio operators in the community and have gotten great response. There are over 200 licenses in our NC area.

Guest Speaker, James Grasso, T-CEP, Disaster Radio Team, related that they have a similar system, "Interopt 22" with five cities plus Topanga, which is an unincorporated area of LA County, communicating and testing once a week. James and Michael both were trained by Norm Goodkin, ham radio instructor.

Michael is trying to grow a network in Hillside Community Emergency Communications. He announced that there will be a test here in this building on October 6th. He recommends going to www.hamwhisperer.com with YouTube videos, which tell you what's important.

6. Topanga Canyon Discussion / Presentation

James Grasso, T-CEP, Disaster Radio Team & CERT. James gave a presentation on the Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness (T-CEP) www.t-cep.org Email info@t-cep.org. Phone: 310-455-3000.

James produced samples of their guide, entitled, “The Topanga Disaster Survival Guide” which is currently being re-done. He explained that they have divided the area into 9 zones. They have two levels of evacuation areas within the community, approved by the Fire Dept., which are the public safe refuges and temporary public safe areas.

Beth Burnham of NTCFSC interjected that depending on the source, there are 8,000 to 14,000 people in Topanga Canyon. They have one major highway, State Route 27, Topanga Canyon Blvd., and various side canyons. They have no HOAs, no city government, they are a free spirited group of people, and people step up to do things.

James continued that they are a County 501(c)(3) that gets some grant money from the County but mostly from the community. They do what they can to purchase and staff their own Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and recently have acquired a mobile command vehicle.

James Grasso (below standing) describes Topanga Canyon’s advancements, drills and community involvement with colleagues Bryce Anderson and Beth Burnham (seated to his right) equally contributing to a very informative and well prepared presentation. From bottom left, Grayce Liu, Danielle Cohen, Joan Herman, Maureen Smith, Cathy Palmer, Hildreth Simmons, Beth, Bryce & James), Andre Stojka and Leslie Stojka gather information.



Bryce Anderson, T-CEP, Disaster Radio Team, recommended Pulse Point app, which shows fires in progress, which he says is a “freebie.” He said that on this app you can see what equipment is sent there and it’s a great way to get information when it’s happening.

James continued that T-CEP is an all-volunteer organization. Their product is information – specifically Emergency Prep – to Topanga and other communities in the SM Mountains. They received their initial funding from Zev Yaroslavsky & community donations. Operations are carried out by 9 teams including a Disaster Radio Team (DRT) which keeps info flowing during emergency, and they do Red Cross damage assessments. He stated that a trained ham radio operator can be a life saver. They have trained hotline operators; use social media with regular posts on Twitter and Facebook, TCEP90290. The hotline, Twitter and Facebook information feeds to their phones regarding fires, accidents, etc.

Bryce Anderson described the usefulness of contact list sheets with your neighbors.

Their website: www.t-cep.org offers EP information and templates to make plans; includes fire danger levels, color coded; red-flag warnings with six day predictions for Santa Ana events. They push the stuff off the database onto their site’s ESP (emergency status page).

One of the biggest challenges they face is that they are volunteers and work very hard to develop a professional relationship with their government officials to gain the respect of their County officials (in their 22 year existence). He stated that LA First Responders use TCEP as a model for other locations.

Bryce added that the book made with the County could be used as a template. Version 2 of the book is a ring binder to swap out pages, and a smaller one for the car. Their new version will be online by the end of the year. To Do Lists included help get the volunteers involved.

Beth Burnham, Founder/Co-President NTCFSC North Topanga Canyon Fire Safe Council, added that running a volunteer organization is much harder than running a company. Bryce suggested paying attention to what people do and what they like. Beth continued that the great thing is that T-CEP has done the transition, the original planning core with 8 people after the ‘93 fire, and moved from a mom and pop organization to where it is now.

Bryce asked, how do your neighbors know how to volunteer? Gary Plotkin stated that he would love to have Donna Larson do a NC presentation, noting that the University of Judaism (AJU) and the temple have donated locations for equipment.

Irene Sandler asked about the hotline room. Bryce answered that during an emergency, they have in their EOC (Emergency Operation Center) to have the hotline staffed 24/7 with 310-455-3000. If no answer, there will be an automated message, which gets re-recorded when there are changes. The hotline is operational when the EOC is activated only if there is a direct threat to the area. It is their landline, but they’re looking to working off the grid on a mountain top.

Hildreth stated that establishing a connection to neighbors is a challenge. She likes use of Chuck’s email lists.

Irene asked what James did when he read about the fire happening (on PulsePoint). He replied that he goes onto the ham radios and gets the frequency at the location of the fire, and, based upon what’s happening there, they have on-duty officers 24/7 who will figure out what’s

happening with that incident; to stand by or other, depending on the severity or non-severity, and then start notifying the people they know, to determine who is threatened and who is not.

Beth Burnham, Founder & Co-President NTCFSC North Topanga Canyon Fire Safe Council: www.ntcfsc.org Email: firesafe@ntcfsc.org Phone: 818-887-8600.

Beth related that she and co-President, Ryan Ulyate, met in 2009 at a meeting for the creation of a community wildfire protection plan. They learned about the fire safe councils with their long-term pre-fire event focus and the opportunity that they created to bring grant money into the community. They were recognized in 2010 as a Fire Safe Council.

Beth noted that Topanga has a lot of active community-based EP organizations focused on EP and management, including T-CEP, Arson Watch and Topanga CERT, and, as a result Topanga is a better prepared for wildfire disaster than many other wildland urban interface communities like LA County.

Their goal is to lessen the severity of a wildfire emergency and help Topanga become a “fire adaptive community” – to lessen the need for extensive protection actions, and enable the community to accept fire as part of the landscape. She stated that for human community planning to take action to safely coexist with the fires, we have to understand the fires and that authorities may not be able to get to them, and to work to mitigate and reduce the impact of fire on our community.

Below, everyone in attendance views the presentation.



They have brought \$270,000 grant funds to Topanga, three were through the Fire Safe Council and the fourth from park service, the SMM National Recreation Area of the NPS, which all required dollar for dollar matches. To date they have generated over \$400,000 in matches, which includes over 5,000 hours of volunteer time. Their grants have three components: Safer ingress and egress through fuel modification (removal of large-scale hazardous vegetation along significant roadways) and increased resident pre-fire preparation through education. They perform home ignition zone evaluations, which are closely watched by their contacts at the LA County FD. Beth offered to put on a one-hour presentation to your organization.

Beth discussed the ember factor in most fires, stating that most homes burn by ember intrusion. She stated that building code requires ¼ inch mesh for rodents on all vents, but recommended that 1/8 inch mesh.

There was some discussion on the liability issue.

Beth concluded by saying that “Being a Fire Adapted Community is being a community that does understand and is prepared.” James, Bryce and Beth were applauded by the group for their presentation and being a model to other hillside communities.

Discussion of Possible Alliance:

Discussion was turned by Chuck at this point to Grayce’s stated communication goal. Below, Chuck Maginnis thanks Grayce Liu for supporting the BABCNC Radio acquisition orchestrated by Michael Schlenker, for her foresight in recommending that all NC’s should communicate with each other via radio and for her attendance during the entire meeting.



Having the LAFD and Emergency Management Department merge together with neighborhood councils will provide a systemic city-wide response, including communications. Michael Schlenker asked Grayce if a NC Coalition would have a greater voice in the City, to which Grayce replied that she has talked to the LAFD who said yes, get them together!

It was noted that alliances are not under the same regulation. Bill Hopkins suggested that if we get an alliance together it is best to know going in that you have a certain amount of protection that the City will defend us on.

Chuck asked what can help Grayce meet her goals of communications between NCs. Grayce stated that she is trying to make things easier and needs alliances like formed NC's with EP groups to push this.

Chuck asked if Bill and Linda's HAM group has provisioned for neighboring operators to join them and if not, would Bill join in with Michael's group, to help spread this, with the Topanga people for the hillside community. Bill agreed to join in while keeping his group whole. Chuck noted that we have had a lot of presentations, including LAFD, LAPD and many other notable institutions, which gets everyone together.

Irene said it's important for the City to get itself together, and decide if EP is one person downtown, the FD, the PD or both. She stated that it's hard to work with the City, and that their main services providers may or may not show up, and that we need DONE to be an emissary for us to say we want to work with you.

Grayce is asking how to make it work to have somebody to connect the NCs throughout the city and asked what we need, and how could this group be of help to us as well.

Hildreth volunteered to write to Eric Garcetti.

7. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Next EP Meeting will be November 17, 2015