

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: May 22, 2025

From: Police Department

Subject: Central Fire District and Police Department Unified Command



Recommended Action: Receive a report about the enhanced collaboration between Central Fire District, Capitola Police Department, the American Red Cross, and the Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience during emergency responses.

Background: In recent years, the City of Capitola has experienced a significant increase in emergency service calls related to natural disasters and public safety incidents. As the frequency of these events grow, coordinated emergency preparedness and response among multiple agencies is essential for protecting lives and property. The Capitola Police Department, Central Fire District and the Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience (OR3) have collaborated on flood, tsunami, coastal storms and other emergency events in the recent past.

To address these challenges, this report outlines the collaborative framework between Central Fire, Capitola Police, Red Cross, and OR3 to ensure integrated emergency preparedness and response, efficient resource deployment, and robust community recovery and resilience planning.

Discussion: Currently, the Capitola Police Department and Central Fire District typically respond independently to incidents, but will shift to a unified command structure when an Emergency Operations Center is activated. Emergency Operations Centers are activated as a response to different types of emergencies, with levels of reactivity dependent on the type of situation at hand. The approach outlined below formalizes multi-agency cooperation and resources provided in key operational areas.

Staff from each of the partner aligned agencies outlined have committed to joint training programs focusing on coordination during multi-agency response operations, joint incident command procedures, and understanding each agency's roles and resources. Examples of past collaborative trainings held include: active shooter training and preventative trainings for special events like the Wharf to Wharf Race and the Capitola Art and Wine Festival.

Staff plans to establish annual, scenario-based training sessions that includes staff from Central Fire District, Capitola Police Department, American Red Cross, and Santa Cruz County OR3. The training sessions will go over the themes outlined below.

1. Unified Command and Communication:

- Utilize shared systems for real-time coordination:
 - Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Operational Area Coordination
 - CruzAware Alert and Warning Platform (Netcom, OR3, Capitola PD)
 - Genasys Protect (formerly known as Zone Haven)
 - Veoci (Countywide Incident Management Platform)
- Incorporate OR3 representatives into unified command operations to align preparedness and response with countywide recovery planning.
- Deploy Red Cross personnel to coordinate shelter, humanitarian support, and volunteer management during large-scale incidents.

2. Co-Response Teams for Emergencies to improve situational awareness and allow for integrated public safety, rescue, and humanitarian assistance.

- Deployment teams that include:
 - Police Officers
 - Firefighters
 - Red Cross emergency response personnel (e.g., shelter managers, health services)
 - Community Emergency Response Teams (C.E.R.T.)
 - OR3 field staff focused on situational assessments and long-term recovery planning

3. Public Outreach and Community Engagement:

- Collaborate with City staff, Red Cross, C.E.R.T. and OR3 to lead:
 - Community education initiatives on emergency preparedness
 - Outreach campaigns during and after emergencies via social media, radio, and alert systems
 - Clear public messaging on evacuation orders, shelter locations, and recovery resources

Through coordination between the City and partner agencies, staff has identified each agency's role and resources available during emergency situations.

Central Fire District, which serves Aptos, Capitola, La Selva Beach, Live Oak, Rio Del Mar, and Soquel, provides the following resources to constituents, such as:

- Fire Prevention (inspections, plan review, public education)
- Fire Suppression (structural, wildland, vehicle fires)
- Emergency Medical Services
- Hazardous Materials Response
- Aquatic and Technical Rescue

The Capitola Police Department, provides the following resources to constituents:

- Public safety services
- Community outreach and communication
- Drone Program for situational monitoring
- Active Shooter and Emergency Preparedness Training
- Access to County EOC and Search and Rescue
- Coordination with Central Fire's Rescue Swimmers, Coast Guard, and Harbor Patrol

The Police Department and Central Fire District also coordinate with the following partner agencies for additional resources and services:

- American Red Cross:
 - Disaster relief, shelter management, reunification services, and emergency supplies
- Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience (OR3):
 - Strategic coordination of countywide emergency preparedness, response, and recovery

- Participation in County Readiness Working Group for preparedness and response coordination, training and exercises
- Coordination with FEMA and CalOES in post-disaster financial recovery, resource distribution, and inter-agency coordination

Fiscal Impact: There is no fiscal impact associated with this report. Costs to respond to emergency incidents will vary depending on incident type, staffing needs, and the scope of interagency response. Fiscal planning will include consideration for resource sharing and potential reimbursement through state and federal disaster programs.

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