

FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE: MANAGING PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS DURING TIMES OF CRISIS

Soraya Sutherlin, CEM, MPA

Emergency Manager

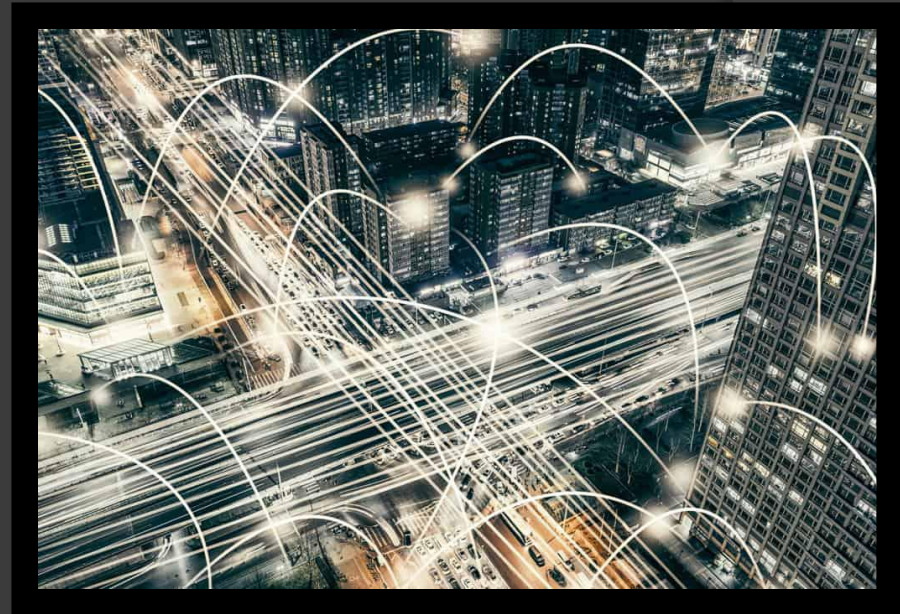
Emergency Management Safety Partners

Objectives

- ⦿ How Incidents and Emergencies Have Changed Emergency Notifications
- ⦿ Interfacing with the Community
 - Social Media vs Conventional Media
- ⦿ The Difference Between Public Information vs Information Management
- ⦿ Public expectation vs. actual risk (weighing the outcomes in notification)
 - Addressing the 3 most common points of failure
- ⦿ AB1646- How the law changes the playing field

Mass Notification Today

- ◎ Fourth Screen Technology
 - Text/SMS
 - Email
 - Social Media
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - NextDoor
- ◎ Door-to-Door (Oroville Dam)
- ◎ AM/FM Radio
- ◎ Conventional Media
- ◎ Print Media (outdated)
- ◎ Landline
- ◎ Sirens

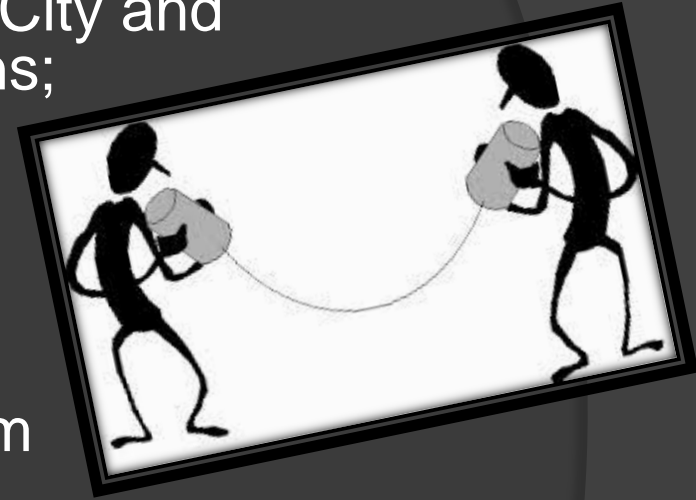


What this means to YOU?

- ⦿ Connectivity has grown from word of mouth to millions with a click of a button;
 - Instant access to information (good and bad);
- ⦿ Information Delay can be Catastrophic
 - Everyone's an instant journalist;
 - Tell your story;
- ⦿ Fluidity of Information;
- ⦿ The expectation has changed;

Mass Notification Circa 2013

- ⦿ Consent Decree (1990) between the City and ExxonMobil regarding plant operations;
 - Community Warning Siren
 - RAN (Radio Alert Network)
 - Mass Notification
- ⦿ Old system was a pay-per-use system
 - Low Frequency of use;
 - Bought out several times by competitors;
 - “Shelf” system for the “in-case of emergency situation”
 - Limited familiarity of what it did or how it worked



The Need to Evolve

Identifying the need

- Automated
- Redundant
- Web-based Solution
- Integrated into daily operations
- Geo-coding of maps, pictures, zones

Evaluating How You Perform (Daily vs Emergency)

- Internal Communications
- External Communications

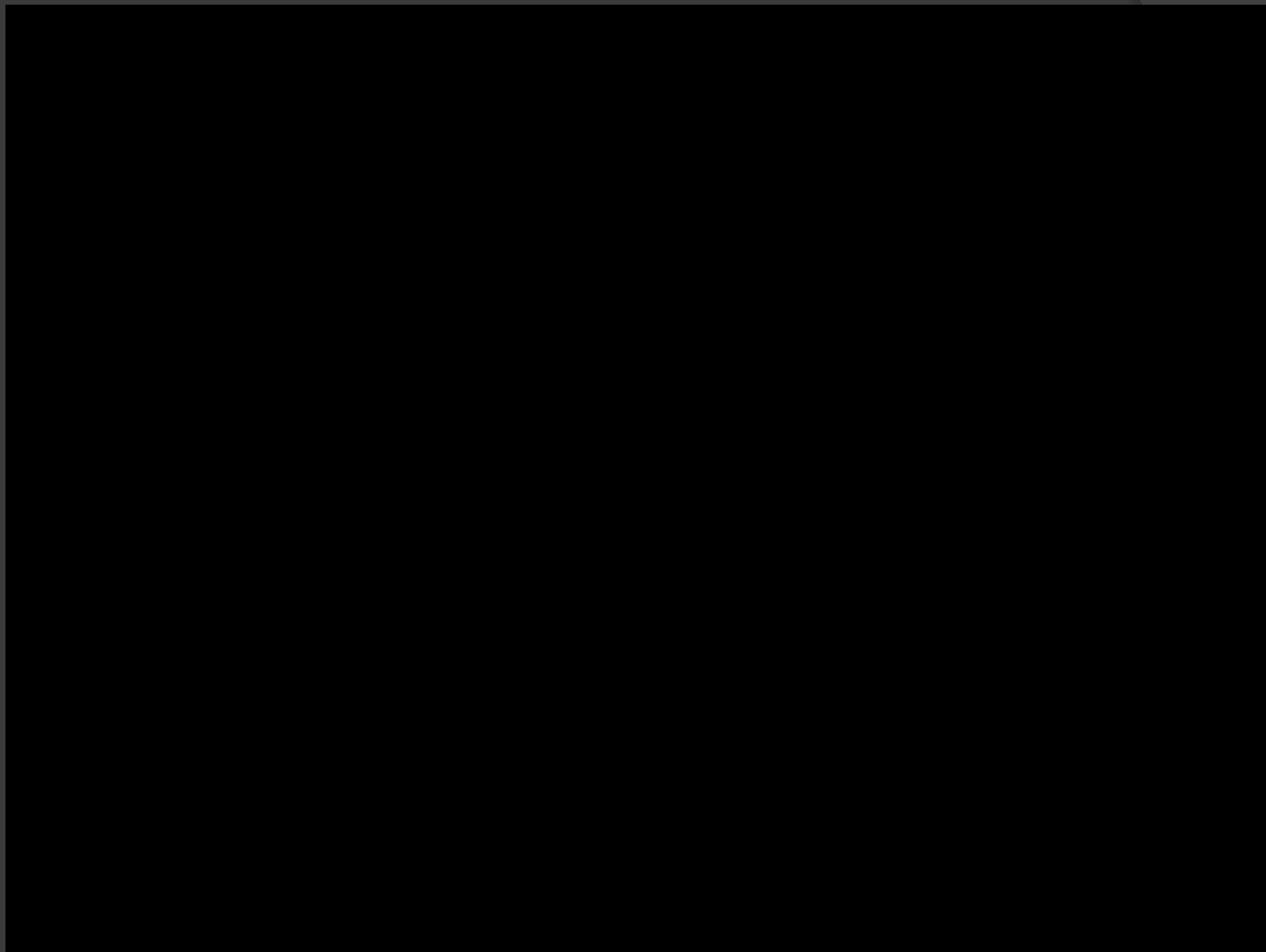


Case Study # 1:

ExxonMobil Refinery Explosion 2015

ExxonMobil Refinery, Torrance





February 18, 2015 ExxonMobil Refinery Incident

- ◉ Weather: 65 degrees, overcast, winds from the **east**, 7mph;
- ◉ Explosion Shook the City (1.7m seismic rating)- Station 3 thought it was an earthquake
- ◉ Initial call came in at 0850 1st alarm response to fire at ExxonMobil refinery;
- ◉ 0854 2nd alarm response called out;
- ◉ TFD arrived on scene, established UC with ExxonMobil FD staff
 - Health Hazmat CANNOT respond Code 3 (time delay)



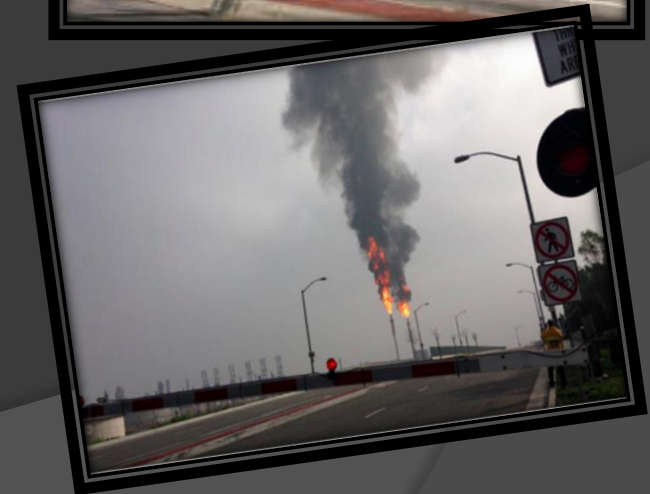
Initial Report

- ExxonMobil reports an explosion in the ESP unit with an initial ground fire that was quickly extinguished by ExxonMobil personnel;
- Major damage to the ESP unit with 2 active gasoline leaks;
- Initial reports of workers missing;
- Product was quickly diverted to the flares;
- 3 minor injuries were reported and treated by XOM personnel.



Risk Determination

- Product identified quickly and determined no public threat by Torrance FD (backed by AQMD)*
- Functionality of the Flares worked as intended;
- Responding personnel did not have appropriate PPE
- Dropped barriers at Del Amo to prevent cars from driving through:
 - Crenshaw barrier left open based on readings and wind direction (BC call);
 - Incident contained, releasing units (approx. 0957)



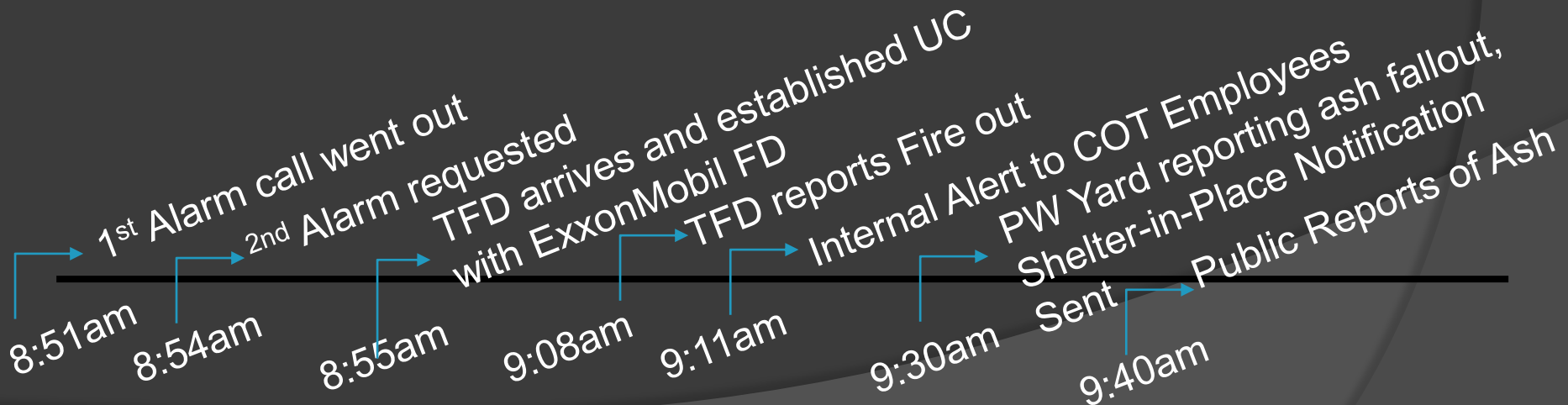
More Information

- ⦿ Torrance Fire Haz Mat (E96) assigned to monitoring
 - Little wind, plume straight up
 - No readings from Hazmat
- ⦿ Main concern/Priority was accountability
 - Initial reports were 8 people missing;
 - Quickly resolved (8 people were decontaminated on-scene based upon fall-out;
 - 3 people treated and transported off-site by XOM personnel
 - ***FD never treated anyone. ****



Incident Timeline

- 9:11am: Internal Alert FYI
- 9:30am: Shelter-in-Place (internal)
- 9:40am: Reports of Ash in Neighborhoods



Incident Notifications

- 9:45: Nixle Alert (Public Notification) indicating a 2nd alarm fire at ExxonMobil TFD/TPD on-scene, no air quality issues at this time
 - 0950: TFD IC advised schools to shelter in place
- 10:05: Nixle Alert (Public Notification) advising those in “affected area” to shelter in place *
- 10:14: TorranceAlerts Public Notification (e-911) sent to identified impacted area to shelter in place as a precaution
 - *Message was a pre-recorded message and template modified to reference “precautionary” instead of mandatory **



Communicating with the Public: Conventional Media

- The Media (Conventional)
 - Within minutes, news media was covering the explosion;
 - Positioned overhead (helicopters), on each axis of the facility;
 - Each outlet was reporting something different.



Social Media: Who is Monitoring?

◉ Social Media

- People started posting almost immediately with pictures
- Conflicting information
- Many reports of “ash-like” substance falling around the City and surrounding *contiguous* cities
- City social media pages were slow to update and not all updated with the same information



Lessons Learned: Messaging

- Messaging Needs to Address the 3 C's
 - Clear
 - Concise
 - Consistent
- Advanced Planning
 - Anticipate a community impact regardless if they are aware
- *Messages must be sent in compliments of TWO using shape files*
 - One to the area directly impacted with a specific action to be taken and provide follow-up;
 - One to the ENTIRE City, notifying them of the incident, where to GET information and where to REPORT information.



Lessons Learned: Messaging

- Develop Holding Statements
 - Do not wait to put information out.
 - Inundation of calls-WC/Dispatch
- Initial notifications : 5-10 minutes from the onset of the incident.
- Updates: 15 minutes for the first hour until you have more concrete information;
- Establish Media Staging
IMMEDIATELY!



Lessons Learned: Response

- ALL responding agencies must participate in Unified Command;
- Messaging across every agency should stem from a Joint Information Center (JIC) to prevent confusion and mixed messaging;
- The request for emergency messaging should be requested via radio to public safety dispatch to create a timestamp (evidence collection);
- EOC was in the “hot zone” —need the capacity to have a virtual EOC, especially if asked to shelter.



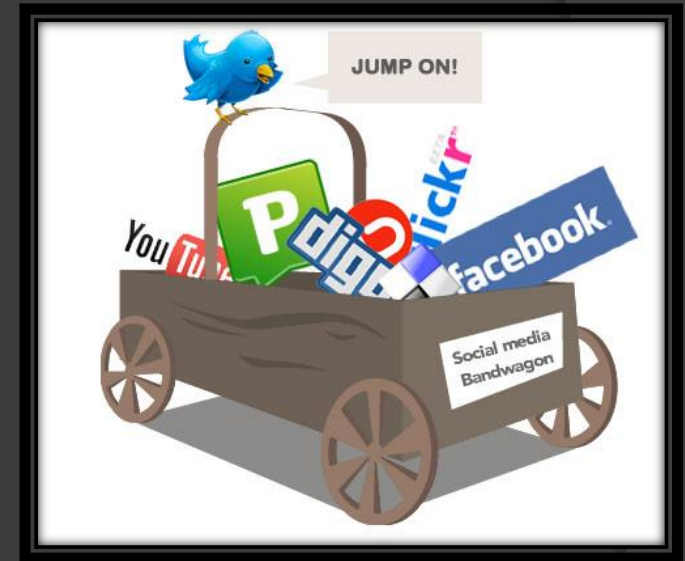
Lessons Learned: Preparedness

- Sirens were not utilized (threshold was not met), but public expected it- education is key on the front end.
- Shelter-in-place means something different to each person. Need to be more specific as what the expected action is when a shelter in place is issued.
- *Think about your contiguous cities*



Immediate After Action Improvement Items

- ◉ Templates
 - Provides for standardization and consistency in messaging
- ◉ Developed Activation Triggers
 - Alert/Standby/JIC/EOC
 - Position Notification
 - Call Escalation
 - Who's the PIO?
- ◉ Alerting Social Media Handles and Pages
 - @TorranceAlerts





Case Study #2:
Reports of Smoke at
ExxonMobil

October 23, 2015

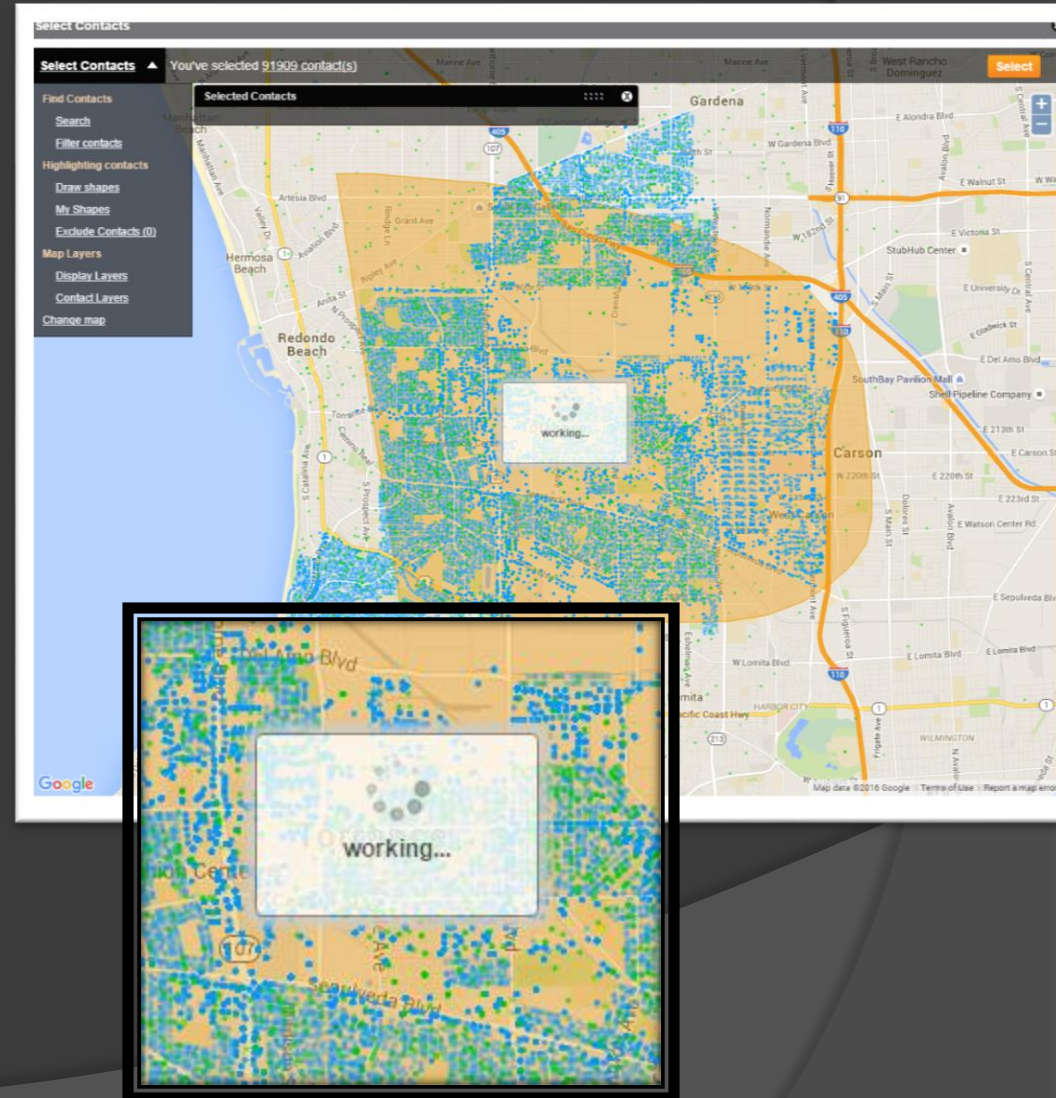
'Shelter in Place' Sirens Rattle Nerves Near Torrance ExxonMobil Refinery

POSTED 7:07 PM, OCTOBER 23, 2015, BY [KENNEDY RYAN](#) AND [DAVE MECHAM](#), UPDATED AT 11:45PM, OCTOBER 23, 2015

- Off-duty firefighter reported smoke at refinery- 5:50pm
- Dispatch called XOM-unaware of incident
- TFD Haz Mat unit responds-5:59pm
- Barricades dropped -6:02pm
- TFD HazMat Unit arrives on scene 6:07pm

October 23, 2015

- Call made to EM at 6:03pm
 - FYI incident in progress
- Battalion Chief requests TorranceAlerts be sent to public via reverse 911 as a 'shelter in place' - 6:24pm
- Dispatchers were unable to send notification due to 'system loading error'



October 23, 2015

- ◉ EM reached, message translated to be sent via reverse 911 group (e-911) to entire city - 6:30pm
 - Unofficial multiple sources confirming incident was stabilized and order had been lifted- 6:32pm
- ◉ All readings clear, units being released 6:37pm
 - Unable to reach the IC to confirm message to be sent



Improvement Items

- ⦿ Education on Emergency Response
 - Physical deployment of resources, ICS, Unified Command;
 - Public sees incident, wants information now;
- ⦿ Information will never be clear
 - Situation is changing faster than can be relayed;
- ⦿ Field response MUST include a Notification Officer- or someone assigned to ENs;
- ⦿ Infrastructure challenges are a REALITY in timely emergency messaging;
- ⦿ Hot-zone GIS mapping layers must be imported to phase notification around the refinery.

Case Study #3:
ExxonMobil Refinery
FCCU Restart

Notification Requirements

- AQMD abatement order-mandated notifications
 - 48 hrs- 1 mile radius
 - 24 hrs- 1 mile radius
- Torrance Unified School District
 - Notification (30 schools regardless of location)



Safe Refinery Restart

Dear Neighbor,

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) Hearing Board approved our request to restart our major gasoline processing unit and effectively resume full operations during its public hearing on April 2 in Torrance.

It is anticipated that the restart will result in higher particulate matter emissions for about six hours; this period is planned to take place within the next two days between the hours of 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Emissions during this period will remain below ambient air quality standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California Air Resources Board (CARB). There will be no significant health risks to the community.

TorranceAlerts will provide text, email and telephone notifications closer to the actual period. If you would like to receive updates, please see information below to sign up for notifications.

Providing a safe working environment that protects our workforce, and the community in which we operate, always will be our first priority.

We thank you...

We would like to thank the community for its input into the public process and want to assure you that we will not waver in our commitment to operate safely, protect the people who live and work near the refinery, and safeguard the environment.

CONTINUED ON BACK ➔

ExxonMobil

Challenges

- ⦿ No definitive date;
- ⦿ Language- who is directing the message;
- ⦿ Notification of 1-mile vs entire City;
- ⦿ Conduit for information;
- ⦿ First time City was named as the resource for information distribution in a stipulated mandate for a private company.

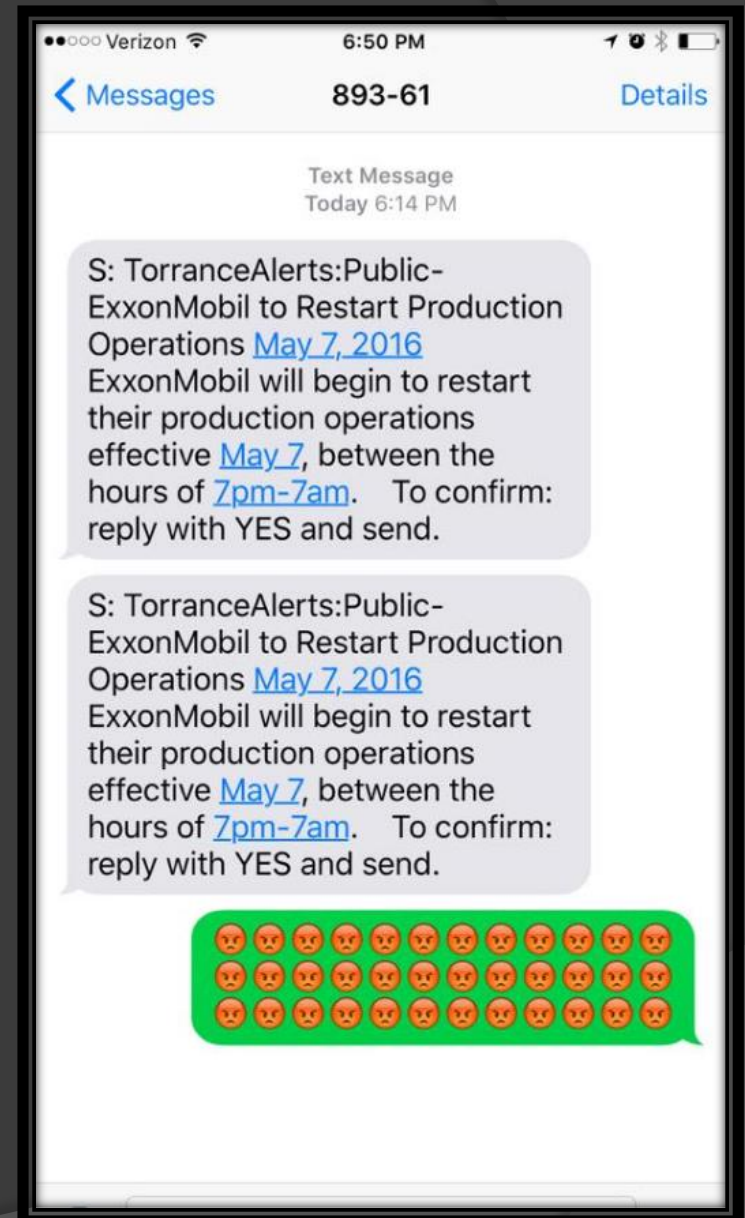


Relying on Third Party Messaging

- ⦿ Messages become delayed;
- ⦿ No central point of contact;
- ⦿ Game of telephone;
- ⦿ Who is responsible for what?
 - AQMD is the Point of Authority
- ⦿ Staying silent when its not your jurisdiction.

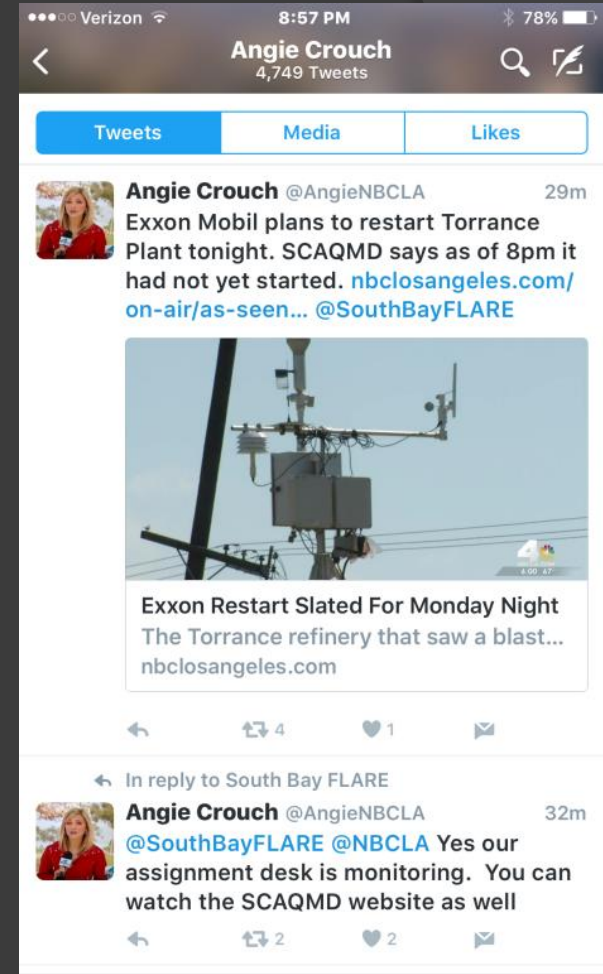
May 7, 2016

- Received word that the start-up would occur May 7, 2016 7pm-7am;
- 48-hr door hanger notices released
- 48-hour optional notification- entire city via TorranceAlerts
- 24-hr notice suspended;
 - Restart delayed 24 hrs



Rescheduled Restart Day

- May 9, 2016
- Social Media Incorporated into messaging
 - Unrealistic expectations;
 - Two-way dialogue is expected
 - Agency response vs personal response.
- Delays in start-up
- Media messaging via social media created uncertainty and unnecessary fear



Media Confusion

Verizon 8:57 PM 78%

Angie Crouch
4,749 Tweets

Tweets Media Likes

In reply to South Bay FLARE

Angie Crouch @AngieNBCLA 32m
@SouthBayFLARE @NBCLA Yes our assignment desk is monitoring. You can watch the SCAQMD website as well

Angie Crouch @AngieNBCLA 1h
Sorry if my last tweet was confusing. I was referring to the delay from Saturday to today. Exxon Mobil restart is still scheduled tonight

In reply to Torrance CA

Angie Crouch @AngieNBCLA 2h
@TorranceCA @NBCLA @SouthBayFLARE I was referring to the delay from Saturday's planned restart to tonight.

WHO TO FOLLOW

Followed by Riverside Sheriff and 2 others

The Gov't of Japan

Home Notifications Moments Messages Me

Verizon 8:58 PM 78%

South Bay FLARE
92 Tweets

Tweets Media Likes

South Bay FLARE Retweeted

christina gonzalez @cgfox11 1h
Reopening #exxon #refinery in #Torrance . Are they handing out those safety suits to area residents? @FOXLA



South Bay FLARE Retweeted

DB Daily Breeze @DailyBreezeNews 2h
Lawmakers raise concerns over study of toxic acid at ExxonMobil refinery in Torrance



Home Notifications Moments Messages Me

Verizon 8:51 PM 81%

Tweet

ANDREA FUJII @CBSLAandrea

Getting ready to restart #ExxonMobil Torrance refinery after explosion. How concerned are people? @10 #KCAL9 #CBSLA



5/9/16, 8:30 PM

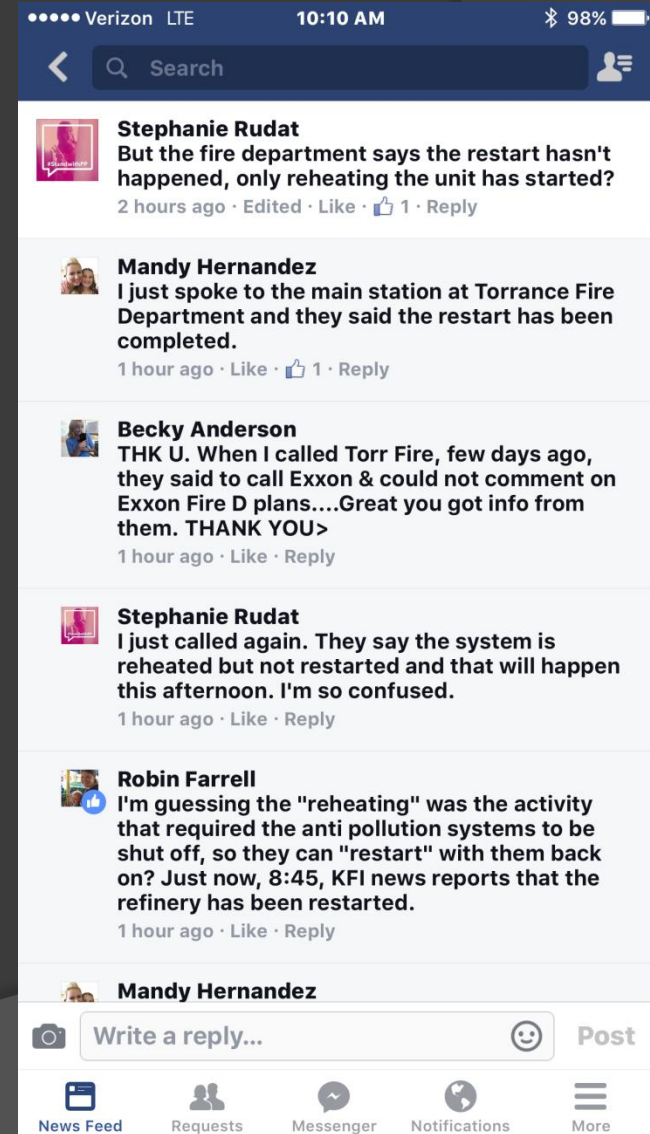
3 RETWEETS 3 LIKES

Reply to ANDREA FUJII

Home Notifications Moments Messages Me

Internal Communications

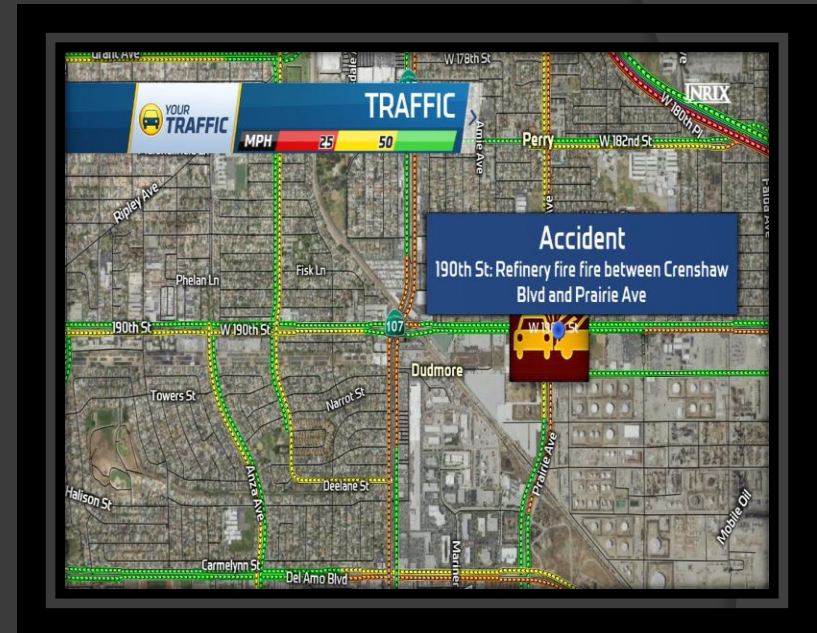
- Ensure EVERYONE in your organization has the right information;
- PR needs to be send in conjunction with any external messaging;



Power Issues-March/Oct/Nov

● Power Outage

- March, 2016- Mylar Balloon
 - “System Disruption”
- September- Heavy Fog
- October, 2016-Power Outage
 - 24 min. without power
 - Shelter-in-place order-30 minutes
- No UPS
- No independent power supply



Feb 18, 2017

- 0600- Reports of Fire and Explosion
- 0645 EOC Activation
- 0657- TorranceAlerts Sent- No release, just explosion and fire.
- 0803-EOC Activation Canceled



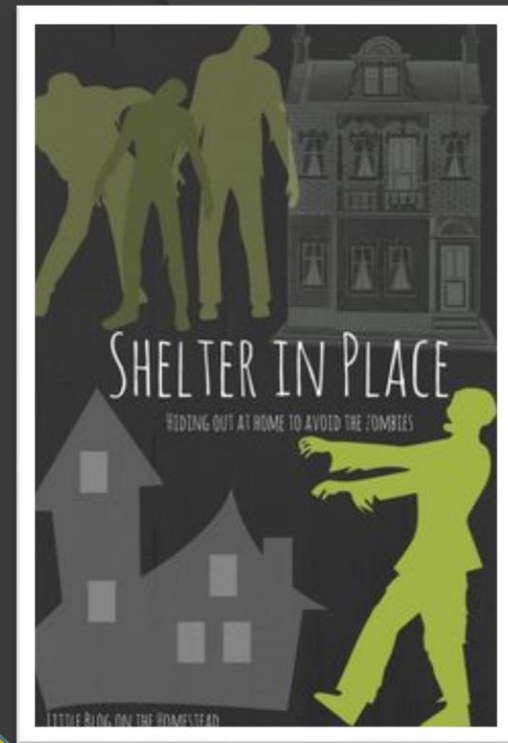
Considerations/Assumptions

- Official Sources-Official Information
- Controlling the flow of accurate information, rather than surrendering to the rumors and opinions of the public.
- People care about
 - Peace of mind
 - Control
 - Survival and ;
 - Protecting their family



Common Terminology

- Shelter-in-place is used interchangeably;
 - Never meant for active shooter or police activity;
 - Boston Marathon Bombings;
- Ensure your messaging is clear-avoid typos;
- Think about your risks- imagine the unimaginable- it can happen
 - Japan
 - San Bernardino



REDONDOBEACHPD: Bicycle Safety Tips: Help Combat Bicyclce Thefts. click link for more information. www.nixle.us/8Y6TS Reply with a friends # to forward

AB 1646: Developing Integration

REGIONAL INTEGRATED EMERGENCY ALERT
AND WARNING NOTIFICATION SYSTEM



Background: Challenges



Disaster after disaster, California keeps falling short on evacuating people from harm's way

- Spotty notification systems across CA
- Different vendors, different platforms;
- 1646 Steering Committee and language interpretations
- Lack of Consistency with Preparedness Messaging
- Lack of notifications across the region

Alert SouthBay



- AB 1646: *"Integrated Alerting and Notification System"*
- Requires notification of "surrounding community around petroleum refinery's to be notified of an incident" to include:
 - Schools
 - Hospitals
 - Public Facilities
 - Transient and Special Needs Populations
 - Residential Care Homes



Alert SouthBay

- ◎ March 2019
 - El Segundo
 - Manhattan Beach
 - Hermosa Beach
 - Redondo Beach
 - Torrance
 - Palos Verdes Estates
 - Inglewood
 - Rolling Hills Estates
 - Rolling Hills
 - Rancho Palos Verdes
 - Gardena
 - Lomita
 - Hawthorne



Alert SouthBay



● Goals:

- Develop integrated alerting regardless of jurisdictional boundary for MAJOR emergencies;
- Develop standardized language and templates for emergency notifications;
- Develop consistent training for the region;
- Coordinate preparedness education and materials for regional access and distribution.



Alert SouthBay



● Organizational Structure

- Regional Emergency Communications Manager
- Governance Board (14 Cities)
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Credentialing Program
- One Name, One Brand, One Portal
- Training Requirements

Alert SouthBay



Deployment

- Implementation Set-up
- Training
- Regional iPAWS
- SOP
- Super-user Training
- Training and Exercise Calendar

Looking Forward- Message Management

- ◉ Mobility will be key for the future;
- ◉ Monitoring Systems
 - GoogleAlerts- catching negative trends
- ◉ *Enhancements to iPAWS will greatly help with notification of targeted areas;
- ◉ SMART Technologies will enhance message delivery
- ◉ Integrating Networks;
 - MOUs, MOAs etc
 - AFN Communities
- ◉ Scalable Functionality-accuracy and granularity in messaging
- ◉ Social Media
 - We are connecting virtually the same way we used to connect through the local deli

Social Media

- ⦿ The new “word of mouth” has changed
 - Reaching your targeted population
 - Connectivity through friends
 - Exposure
 - Retweets/posts (x25)
 - Conversations
 - Extended reach
 - Information travels, the good, bad, and inaccurate.
- ⦿ And all this is happening from a Smartphone
- ⦿ Put the best people you have in charge of social media

Traditional Media Enhances Social Media

- ⦿ Posts generate “chatter”
- ⦿ People can turn to traditional media with the use of social media
 - Use it to your advantage

Final Thoughts

- ◎ Be Genuine;
 - “Our thoughts and prayers”
 - Tell a story –greater impact
- ◎ Practice your plan
 - Plans change, modify as necessary.
 - Be careful about policy



Thank You