



Sunday, September 12, 2021

Good Sunday Morning,

It was my great honor to share the 20th Anniversary of September 11, 2001 with you, 152 community emergency responders from Daly City to Palo Alto, at the 5th Atherton Community Emergency Drill at Holbrook Palmer Park.

We began this special day with a moving personal tribute to those who lost their lives many years ago, firefighters, police, first responders and our fellow citizens. Police Chief Steve McCulley and I shared a few words of remembrance, followed by a prayer by Pastor Dan Monroe, a pledge of allegiance to the flag of our country and ending with a moving bagpipe rendition of “Amazing Grace” by Ken Sutherland.

Like those professional responders on 9/11, we citizen emergency responders demonstrated the best in all of us by practicing those skills, that in a disaster, will reduce death, minimize injuries and bring calm within chaos. By our collective actions on Saturday we gave enduring tribute to all those who run in when others are fleeing, professionals and San Mateo County residents alike. We honored those who went to their God on 9/11/2001.

Your ability to work with individuals whom you did not know, to resolve challenging disaster scenarios, to recover from setbacks and to successfully accomplish overall teamwork success bodes well for the concept of building a community response effort whose foundation is your local CERT program.

During the five-hour drill, you citizen responders assessed 20 separate neighborhood and park disaster conditions resulting from a 7+ earthquake, deployed to recover thirteen (13) injured residents, suppressed a house fire and with Atherton Police recover an abducted child and injured abductor. In the mass casualty portion of the drill (car/bus collision with the rear of the bus in flame) response teams secured the site, suppressed the fire, performed mass triage and extracted or recovered thirteen (13) victims in 65 minutes. It was a most excellent day of demonstrated teamwork, response, resilience, recovery from missteps and repeated successes. And we devoured 21 extra-large Round Table pizzas to close out this day of accomplishments.

Check out some of the photos from yesterday’s drill at:
<https://www.getreadyatherton.org/drill-photos-2021>



I would like to especially thank, Atherton Police Chief Steve McCully, Commander Joe Wade and Sergeant Jon Fong, Menlo Fire Division Chief Manny Navarro, Menlo Fire Captain Randy Kelly and his Engine 3 (Almendral) crew, Tom Owen and his Drone Operations team from Menlo Fire, Menlo Fire Martin Mijangos, Menlo Park OEM instructor George Miller, Town of Atherton Council Mayor Elizabeth Lewis, Atherton Council Members Bill Widmer, Rick DeGolia and Diana Hawkins-Manualian, Sacred Heart Schools Safety and Security Director Sherman Hall, MPFPD Board Directors Virginia Chang Kiraly and Rob Silano, Atherton Town staff Francesca Reyes, Jennifer Frew, park staff and Atherton Town Manager George Rodericks for supporting and participating on Saturday in making this Atherton resident community effort a success.

To the ADAPT Board, bravo for a task well performed and executed. I leave the citizen emergency response area after 25 years and ADAPT knowing that the Town of Atherton is in good hands. I have experienced immense learning and much satisfaction over that time span.

Thank you to the Menlo Atherton High School film club and the Riekes Center film team and all of you who got up early to pick up food, set up the drill, deliver pizzas and assist in returning the park and the Pavilion back to good order.

Special kudos go out to our Menlo Park merchant sponsors, Ace Hardware, El Camino Safeway and Starbucks, Peet's Coffee, Trader Joe's, El Camino Chevron, Round Table Pizza and Staples.

Congratulations to all of us, Unit Leaders, Team Leaders and Team Members on this sacred anniversary day for participating in an event in which we met fellow West Bay citizen emergency responders and had an opportunity to stretch our crisis response minds and muscles in a large-scale disaster simulation.

I will follow up with more drill information milestones and areas of improvement soon.

Remain well, remain prepared and Godspeed.

Tom Prussing
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