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MOFD hosts International Disaster Management Seminar

By Nick Marnell



From left, MOFD seminar participants from Namibia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, South Africa and Myanmar (Burma). Photo MOFD

Disaster preparedness and response professionals from around the world converged on the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Aug. 20 seeking to enhance their ability to prepare for and respond to natural disasters. The district sponsored the final exercise of the 2018 U.S. Forest Service International Disaster Management Seminar, which included 29 participants from 21 countries all over the world.

The district put on a Sand Table exercise that included two modeled incidents based on a scenario of a large earthquake ripping through the Hayward fault. One part of the exercise included an evacuation caused by a potential weakness in Briones Dam while another group had to deal with a wildland fire threatening homes on the Orinda-Lafayette border.

participants used knowledge they had gained over the first two weeks of the seminar to implement the Incident Command System and the coordination required at the local, regional, state and national levels of government. "They dealt with the entire scope of a disaster, including political issues," said Dennis Rein, MOFD emergency preparedness coordinator, who hosted the event.

MOFD staged the exercise at Fire Station 45 and included simulated TV news reports, radio transmissions and written communications for the participants. The

Participants grabbed dinner at the Orinda Safeway, and they ate and shared disaster response stories at the Orinda Community Park, across from the fire station. Rein said the sartorial award went to the forest general director of Tunisia, who wore his full military uniform everywhere he went, all day long.

The 15-day seminar included time with the San Francisco Fire Department, the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Cisco Systems and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services. Some participants went to the Mendocino Complex Fire to observe the coordinating efforts used in handling that major disaster.

"The idea was for them to see how the U.S. manages large-scale incidents," Rein said. "The event provided great international exposure for MOFD." And every participant - including the Tunisian general - went back to their home country with an MOFD hat and T-shirt.

Volunteers from Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team and the MOFD communications support unit aided the district in putting on its portion of the seminar.

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