

‘This exercise was definitely a confidence booster’

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“Having it done is a relief because it went well and I gained a lot from it,” she said. “I was able to see some areas for improvement.”

The main takeaway is that more knowledge of departmental evacuation plans is needed.

“This exercise brought to light that concern,” she said. “But overall, the evacuation of the Governance Center went well and people met in the correct places. I was also able to get the Emergency Operations Center (at the Tribal Police Station) up and running.”

At approximately 8:18 a.m. sirens sounded in the Governance Center and employees who subscribe to Tribal AlertSense notifications received an e-mail, phone call or text stating that the exercise had begun. E-mails also were sent to all employees the day before to remind them about the exercise.

Central Phones Operator Scarlett Holtz stood near the front entryway and used a megaphone to give instructions.

Most employees gathered at the old powwow grounds across the street from the Governance Center and huddled in small groups while sirens continued to sound.

Tribal Council member Steve Bobb, a Vietnam-era Marine Corps veteran, has seen his share of violence in battle.

He said exercises such as this are beneficial because they help give at least a small idea of what a real-life scenario would entail.

“It is much better to have a plan in place than no plan at all,” he said.

General Manager David Fullerton said that practice helps employees prepare for the worst.



Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight ensures that the Governance Center is evacuated during the emergency management training event held on Thursday, Nov. 1.



Central Phones Operator Scarlett Holtz uses a megaphone to announce the evacuation of the Governance Center during an emergency management training exercise.

“We want people to know what to do and where to go,” he said. “It’s all about preparedness.”

It was the second emergency preparedness drill for several Tribal employees, who also participated in the Cascadia Rising event in 2016, which simulated the aftermath of a major subduction zone earthquake.

Staff Accountant Gloria Schwalger said the alarms going off were a jolt, despite knowing this event was an exercise.

Budget Manager DeAnne Norton suggested having a drill with no warning in the future.

“I think it would be good to have them when we weren’t expecting it, like the schools do,” she said.

Volunteers, complete with make-up and clothes giving them the realistic look of bombing victims, wandered out from the Governance Center. Some were dazed, and others were crying and yelling. The exercise simulated a bomb exploding in the Tribe’s Finance Department.

Employees took them to the medical clinic, but personnel had been directed not to open the doors and had to give instructions on first aid from inside the glass.

Meanwhile, Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight and Sgt. Rod McAllister searched the building and walked the perimeter to ensure safety.

Colin Kolb was the moulage artist for the event, as well as a volunteer victim.

The former police officer and emergency medical technician said it was fairly easy to get into character because he has ample experience with emergency situations.

“These events are helpful for law enforcement and emergency responders,” Kolb said. “It also gives a little bit of reality and kind of prepares people for if something does happen. They have an idea of what to do.”

Responders included Tribal Police, West Valley Fire and Rescue, the Salem Police and Oregon State Police bomb squads, Willamette Valley Hospital, Salem Hospital, Yamhill County Sheriff’s Office and Polk County Sheriff’s Office.

“This exercise was definitely a confidence booster,” Bishop said.

“When I first started the process, it was overwhelming and new. Now I know I can do it because I have the support of my co-workers, Tribe and community to get it done. I want to thank the moulage artists, volunteers and everyone involved in the planning of this event.”

Bishop said she hopes to have another emergency preparedness event in the near future.

“Hopefully, people are as open to doing this next time as they were today,” she said. “I learned a lot in this process about how to get the exercise to run smoothly.” ■



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Lt. Jacob Alguire, West Valley Fire District training officer, guides the extension of a ladder during the emergency management training event held at the Governance Center on Thursday, Nov. 1.