

Disaster: Honing the response in wake of tragedy

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exercise responded to mustard gas, and Wednesday, while I was there, was an exercise of the aftermath of a cesium nuclear “dirty bomb.” A formal evaluation was Thursday.

The exercise is designed to hone members’ readiness and ability to augment civilian authorities in response to human and natural disasters. I was escorted during the exercise by Maj. Sam Lee and Lt. Daniel Delgado of public affairs.

In our scenario, the dirty bomb was detonated by terrorists and the group immediately put on hazmat suits and set up the decontamination and other tents.

Next, they searched through the rubble for victims. An infrared heat detector gun was used to see if anyone was trapped inside a damaged aqueduct tunnel.

Medix Ambulance stood by with a “water buffalo,” a car-sized water tank.

We followed local resident Martin Adams, who lives in Clatsop Plains and was hired to pose as a victim. He could still walk after the bomb, while other victims could not.

Adams was given a wristband by an emergency medical technician and a triage tag around his neck noted he had lacerations and a broken arm. His personal effects were stuffed into a bag and he was moved along to the decontamination tent. There they cut off his shirt (in an actual emergency like this, they’d have stripped him naked), and he was sprayed down. Then he moved to the next station where he was sprayed again.

At a fourth station, a team member with a Geiger counter checked Adams for radiation. Next, he was escorted to an administrative tent where all his vitals, injuries and poten-



Photos by D.B. Lewis/The Columbia Press

Clockwise from top left: A team member uses an infrared gun to search a damaged tunnel for victims. ‘Victim’ Martin Adams holds his bagged belongings while his shirt is cut off. Adams at the administrative tent. A nonambulatory victim is tended to on a portable conveyor belt.

tial treatments were recorded. Finally, it was off to the medical tent to treat his broken arm and lacerations.

Meanwhile, in the nonambulatory tent, victims arrived on stretchers and were rolled from station to station along an innovative portable con-

veyor belt.

Throughout it all was professional efficiency and a sense of unified mission.

Considering the many uncertainties after a natural disaster, I feel just a bit safer knowing that teams like this exist.

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Brian Dutton, Owner



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Oregon could see rolling blackouts during wildfire emergencies

The Oregon Public Utility Commission has approved temporary rules that include potential public safety power shutoffs during the 2021 wildfire season.

The state’s investor-owned electric utilities, including Pacific Power, also will have some fire-related reporting requirements. The rules provide guidance for utilities during safety emergencies until permanent rules are adopted.

One million acres burned across the state during Oregon’s historic 2020 wildfire season. Portland Power had its first emergency power shutoff during that time.

A public safety power shutoff is a measure of last resort designed to keep high-risk areas safe by proactively

shutting off electricity during extreme and dangerous weather conditions when energized electrical lines could be damaged and ignite a fast-moving wildfire.

The rules for utilities spell out when a shutoff is allowed as a way of minimizing the impact on home medical devices, access to 911 services and the ability to pump water.

“With the earliest official opening to Oregon’s wildfire season in 40 years, the establishment of these rules was extremely important and timely,” said Letha Tawney, PUC commissioner.

The temporary rules will remain in effect through mid-November.

See related story on county’s fire season on Page 6.

Celebrate! July 4, 2021

Fourth of July Parade
3 p.m. in Warrenton
S. Main Ave from SW 1st to 9th

Fireworks Display
10 p.m. in Astoria
Look to the sky over the Columbia River near downtown

With COVID safety in mind, we are asking for everyone’s help to keep crowding to a minimum during this holiday weekend. Please be courteous to those around you, and pack out what you bring in, like food containers, personal fireworks & other garbage.



Thanks for making the 4th of July a blast!
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