



***Here are some questions and answers gleaned from the Sept. 5 Facebook Live Q-and-A with Office of Emergency Services staff. Some questions and answers may have been edited for clarity, redundancy and slang.**

Q: What evacuation routes should a person use in the event of an emergency?

A: In this County, we have three rivers that rise and fall and fast-rising creek and has the potential to inundate roadways. At some point throughout the County, all of our major highways traverse one of these bodies of water. That being said, every disaster is dynamic, no disaster is the same, and the evacuation routes are going to be very dependent on the disaster we are facing. Your best option is to be familiar with evacuation routes that are known to you: know your roadways; know the back ways to get out of the areas you are frequently in; know multiple ways out; have a plan; and in the event of a disaster, look towards us, the County, to be able to provide you with information regarding the conditions of those roads. We coordinate very heavily with Caltrans and Public Works during our disaster times and we have folks that have eyes on the ground who can notify you if a road has been inundated. In 1986, if you headed north, you were driving into floodwaters. In 1987, if you headed south, you were driving into floodwaters. So it's very important to understand all the different areas and ways out.

In a fire situation, it is a moving target and it's very important not only for fire purposes but for inundations, to be signed up for CodeRED. You can do all the preparation you want, but if you're not signed up for notifications from the County—you could be asleep, you could be watching TV, not get the notification, and end up in a bad situation, which we do not want. We want you prepared; we want you ready to go so when you received that phone call you're out the door.

Q: Does OES have shelter-in-place locations predesignated in the foothills for fast-moving fires?

A: No. If you are to shelter in place, you should do so in your own home. You should be ready to shelter in place prior to any type of fire, and we do not recommend sheltering in place—only in a last-ditch effort. You should go online, find out what is important and what you will need because especially during a fire, a very dangerous avenue to go down.

Q: We learned with the Oroville Dam evacuation that our current highway system that goes through Marysville is extremely inadequate for mass evacuations. Is there any movement with the Marysville bypass and/or a second Highway 70 bridge south of Marysville, and/or widening of the existing E Street Bridge and Highway 70 south of Marysville?

A: Yuba County OES makes its plans according to what is in front of them and the available resources, technology and, yes, roads. Other operations in the county address the planning side of things, and many of the roadways you mention are under state jurisdiction (E Street Bridge, Hwy 70, etc). OES makes plans according to current conditions. I can tell you that Yuba County has been working for more than a decade to acquire land necessary for a route around Marysville, but it is a very slow and very expensive process. It is likely to take many more years to accomplish something of that scale. It's always possible Caltrans will take it up as a project, at some point. A couple months ago, Yuba County noted the benefits of a bypass for a congressional bill that seeks to assist with evacuation routes. We'll have to wait to see how that plays out. What residents can do personally is to try to always have at least a half-tank of gas and a go-bag ready for when an emergency hits. Per the Department of Homeland Security: the Oroville Dam Spillway emergency was the largest peacetime, no-notice evacuation in U.S. history – meaning the roadways were sure to clog.

Q: Is there a special plan in place for Senior Care Homes? There wasn't in Yuba City during the Oroville Dam crisis. I could not get to my mother due to the bridges and traffic and she was at Yuba City Assisted Care. I called for hours into the night and the nurses kept saying that the administrator was caught in traffic and they did not have a plan until he got there. It was one of the worst nights of my life picturing my mom in bed with the water surrounding her.

A: Each care home is supposed to have their own plan. We have found through the Oroville Spillway incident that some of the care homes did not and they relied upon public transit to evacuate. In Yuba County, we're going to step in if there is not a plan. We have spoken with Yuba-Sutter Transit and the school district and have been told they will be there to help evacuate our folks with access and functional needs, our elderly, people with disabilities. I would get a hold of (the problem care home's) administrator now while there's not an issue going on, and demand they provide you with a plan. If not, get in contact with the California Department of Public Health.

Q: What about volunteer opportunities?

A lot of that happens during an event, when we might look to volunteers to help out, whether it was in the care of animals or meals for evacuees. Your best opportunities would be to think about what work it is you'd like to do whether serving food or working with animals, and try to partner with groups already in existence for that. There is a vetting process we, or these organizations, like to put volunteers through.

Q: Does Yuba County have a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to help the elderly and those with disabilities:

A: We don't have a team but we utilize the fire department, law enforcement, Yuba-Sutter Transit, the school district and In-Home Supportive Services staff to assist with those folks. We also team up with Yuba County Health and Human Services.

Q: Why don't you open all the lanes during a larger-scale evacuation? Why are there still two lanes of traffic allowed?

A: We've had conversations about that in-depth, especially during the Spillway incident, but it's called contraflow. To set that up is very labor-intensive, you need a significant number of law enforcement and barricades to stop people from going the wrong way. Think about downtown Marysville and how many roads that lead to the highway. You also need a way for emergency vehicles that still need to go to calls. We've spoken to (Yuba City Mayor and retired CHP Commander) Shon Harris, and he's firmly against contraflow.

Q: What about siren alerts for fires, especially in the foothills?

A: Emergency Operations Manager Scott Bryan sits on the fire safe council on behalf of Yuba County, which has brought back information that sirens are normally used in flat lines, tornado alley. They're not typically used in the terrain we see in our foothills. That's because you need so many and you need power to them and they're out in the middle of nowhere. You may have a generator but if a fire is burning, it's going to come through and take the signal down for the siren tower. We have looked into it and just for the area of Dobbins/Oregon House, it as in the tens of millions of dollars. But the County is not against sirens—let's make that clear. If there was a one-size-fits-all and we were able to do that, then that would be the go-to. But as we stand right now, there's peaks in valley and putting sirens in valleys or on mountain tops isn't going to allow for people to hear the sirens go off. We are looking at alternatives to sirens, like a redundant system that would help supplement CodeRED.

Q: What exactly does OES handle? There was a 22-acre fire a couple weeks ago in the foothills and residents received no CodeRED alert. Why wasn't OES activated?

A: In the Incident Command Structure, you have your local-level first responders: firefighters, law enforcement. OES comes in when our local resources are tapped, meaning they have no more resources they can throw at an incident and have to start borrowing resources from other counties. We come in to support in those situations. This 22-acre fire was one our local resources felt they had the appropriate level of resources to handle that specific incident. In the event that you felt like you got no notification when you should have, you can call the sheriff's office—which does have the ability to push out those notifications.

Q: Has the 2015 County Emergency Plan been updated since 2017 or 2018?

A: It is designed to be reviewed every year and required to be updated and approved by the Board of Supervisors every five years. We're actually doing it a year early, this year, we will be taking it to the disaster council and then to the full Board for final adoption. The emergency operation plan is reviewed every year and as are all our supporting annexes. When it's reviewed every year, we generally test it every year—either through an actual disaster or response, or through exercises.

Q: Is information going out onto Twitter, etc?

Scott and Briana won't have time to post to social media themselves, but we have a communications team (Russ and Rachel) who will be updating our Facebook, Twitter and NextDoor pages.

Q: Any trip-ups with signing people up for CodeRED alerts?

A: If you're familiar with using a computer, it's a matter of a couple of minutes for your time. Just like with anything else, it can be intimidating. If you need help, we encourage you to call our office and we will walk you through it (749-7520), or if you want to come down and see us we will show you the office and help you sign up. If you have a home phone, continue to register your home phone.

Q: Plumas Lake has a limited number of roadways ... does that pose an evacuation issue for the County?

A: When we're dealing with south County, a lot of what we're talking about is slow-rise flooding. We're going to go through our progressions and do a voluntary evacuation and hopefully people will heed that warning and go. If we have to call for that mandatory evacuation, the roads won't be as clogged and we will have a plan showing people how to get out. With Caltrans, CHP, Marysville, Public Works, Wheatland, we bring them all into a room and we put that plan together.

Q: How critical is it to get a third bridge when considering exit routes during an evacuation?

A: You kind of have to sit back and watch this process take place, and it can't really affect immediately your planning for emergencies. If we were able to get a third bridge, that would be fantastic, but we've been hearing about a third bridge for 40+ years.

Q: Are we worried about the Oroville Dam?

No—it's in a lot better shape than it has been. OES toured the facility this summer and saw a PowerPoint of the fix on the main spillway and the team was impressed with the anchors being used and the amount of concrete and new technology going into it.

Q: What's important beyond relying on a phone call or technology on your phone?

A: Know your resources: you can call our call center (749-7520) or go on our website and watch the river levels as they rise and fall (<https://bit.ly/2o0k5fa>). If you're in the foothills and worried about fire, you can follow Yuba Net fire (YubaNet.com/fires)-- they have really good monitoring of active incidents. Also, just be aware of your surroundings and understand what threats we face in Yuba. You can view our hazard mitigation plan (<https://bit.ly/2oDZbTu>). Tune into your local radio stations, TV, newspapers to get local information.

Q: During the emergency spillway evacuation, the intersection of Highway 20 and 22nd Street became gridlocked quickly, mostly because of people blocking the streets getting to and from the apartments there. The County evacuation plan needs to address this intersection with City officials to ensure someone is managing traffic there to ensure flow.

A: That intersection is within the City of Marysville's jurisdiction. CHP on Highway 20 should be heavily involved in assisting the City with that. That was something we have talked to Chief Sachs about after the evacuation. As far as County resources, if we're called upon to assist, we will. We're not boots on the ground, we're getting feedback from law enforcement and firefighters and EMS— we're told roads were blocked because people were getting fuel. It wasn't the number-one reason, but it played a role. You need to make sure you have fuel in your

cars, at least half a tank of gas, and make sure that if you're evacuating, you're not obstructing the roadway.

Q: How do you plan to evacuate the people who occupy the riverbed if there's an emergency along the Feather or Yuba rivers?

A: In the event of a slow-rise flood event, the County notifies – typically through law enforcement officers – these people down at the riverbottoms and advises them that they should leave. This is done as soon as the County gets notification or forecast of rising rivers. But officials don't necessarily have the authority to force them to leave—we can only advise. Many of them know we don't have the authority to physically remove them. It's not just during a slow-rise event—we notified the populations at the riverbottoms this spring when Bullard's Bar started releasing water that the water level would rise four or five feet and that it would be very cold and moving swiftly.

Q: Will the forthcoming Hard Rock Hotel and Casino project in Wheatland create traffic congestion during an evacuation?

We foresee that it would not be an issue because if we're having a slow-rise event where we felt the water was going to peak and we have issued voluntary evacuations, we expect people will have checked out of their hotel rooms. Our slow-rise flood plan is based on forecasting and has worked seamlessly. Then there's the Oroville Spillway incident where everything is good one second and then the trigger is pulled and everyone is fleeing – that's a completely different scenario one that generally, we don't face.

Q: Will we get a true and accurate inundation map?

It depends on what the situation is. There are maps for different incidents like a partial or total dam failure. It's hard because of topography and we don't know where a breach would occur. Without that, it is really impossible to provide an inundation map. Maps are only as good as a series of assumptions and every storm is different and has to be created within that moment and forecast.

The best thing to do is if we're advising of a voluntary or mandatory evacuation, please heed the warning. If you're concerned, call our Call Center—where you will get a Yuba County employee who will give you the most up-to-date information.

Q: Who we are:

Scott Bryan has been with Yuba County Office of Emergency Services for over 13 years. Before that, he was with the Yuba County Sheriff's Office and spent six years in the Special Investigations Unit. Briana Schuette has been with OES around four years. Before that, she worked in emergency medical services and as a state firefighter.