

Disaster Prep History in Fairgrove by Nancy Burnett

Memory of our early beginnings as a “disaster prepared neighborhood” is a bit fuzzy, but here is my record. Initially, Pat Jocius informally trained a few Fairgrove Neighbors, including George and Susan Gerner, Herbert Knoesel, and me, in **1993**.

In **1994**, the Gerners headed the first Fairgrove disaster drill. Fairgrove was composed of 220 Eichlers at that time. As I recall, we had a Search and Rescue team and a First Aid team. Clem Wang was our only ham radio operator.

Evidently, official CERT training began in Spring, **1995**, under the leadership of Santa Clara Fire District’s Marie Moore, who had been hired by Cupertino. George and Susan Gerner, Clem Wang, and Herbert Knoesel were in that class. The Gerners obtained their ham radio licenses that year, also. A Fairgrove drill was scheduled by the Gerners, but it was cancelled because only one Fairgrove family had signed up in advance to participate!

I have a photo of the **1996** CERT class; it includes Fred Horiuchi, Ed Jajko, Bob White, and me. We posed in front of the HazMat truck. There were 25 in that class - all Cupertino. As mayor, Don Burnett handed out CERT vests and congratulated us. (Myke Smith was in that CERT group, too, but he missed being in the picture because he had to make up a missed class before being allowed to graduate.)

Fairgrove had a successful drill On **Saturday, April 27, 1996, at 10AM**. Designated Headquarters was the Gerner home, and George and Susan Gerner handled both Ham Radio and Walkie-Talkie communications. Teams included: First Aid, Search and Rescue, “Needs of Small Children”, and Special Needs (people who looked in on frail, handicapped, and/or chronically ill residents).

Walkie-Talkies, precursors of the later FRS radios, were used by some teams in the early years. We found them to be large, cumbersome, and limited in capabilities, but we muddled through. We switched to FRS radios for neighborhood communications in 1997 or 1999.

A drill on **Saturday, April 3, 1997, at 10AM** was my first as drill leader. “Victim” scenarios were designed by Nina Yeats, after consultation with First Aid leader Dan Levin and me. The evening before the drill, each household in which people had agreed to participate was given a yellow PARTICIPANT sign to post and a sealed envelope describing their fictitious predicament, with instructions to open the envelope when the fire siren announced the simulated earthquake. This was a good drill, and even enjoyable because of the suspense generated by scenarios, but participation was low, with only 18% of the neighborhood actually participating on teams or as victims. The drill was followed by a street barbecue in front of the Weiss home, on Stendhal Lane.

Perhaps the most challenging Fairgrove exercise was a drill in the darkness of **Saturday, April 10, 1999, beginning at 8:30PM** “without power.” Fairgrove had gained an additional 5 non-Eichler homes in Phil Place. Residents in 40 homes participated that year, 18% again. Teams and victims performed using illumination by lanterns and flashlights.

To enlist interest, in **Fall, 2000** Fairgrove staged an **EXPO**, which included a Street Fair on Stendhal Lane, with cooperation from Cupertino OES. Equipment shown included a gas meter. Nicols Fire Extinguisher Service was on hand to recharge and sell fire extinguishers. A fire truck parked on the street, and firemen invited youngsters to inspect it. Refreshments were served, and additional neighbors signed up for the various disaster teams.

A month later, we had our **2000 drill**, with 49 participating homes, about 22% of the neighborhood. We used a person-size dummy, and had four serious “victims” in addition to a few walk-ins. An “aftershock” was used for added realism.

In 2002, the Board of Directors agreed to have a neighborhood drill once every 18 months. Drills in 2002 and 2003 were led by Johnny Zweig.

In **2002**, Johnny Zweig offered several preliminary FRS Radio training opportunities, which included a useful information sheet created by Clem Wang. The drill itself was held at on Sunday, April 28, at 7PM. This gave teams an opportunity to begin at daylight and adjust to darkness gradually.

Sunday had worked well as a practice day, so the next drill was scheduled on Sunday, November 16, 2003. Door-Knob Hangers, invented by Ron Miller, resulted in a recorded 73% participation, including those who displayed an “OK” using their hangers.

In **November, 2004**, Fairgrove participated in a City-wide CERT/CARES drill, using it as an opportunity to practice our communications procedure within the neighborhood, as well. Fairgrove’s CARES-affiliated Ham radio operators all became part of a newly-designed Fairgrove Communications team. Ron Miller and I attended a joint CARES/CERT evaluation meeting at the Vallco OES facility a few days later.

In **2005**, Fairgrove’s Special Needs team was combined with First Aid, and the “Needs of Small Children” name was changed to “Child Care.” The Communications team planned preliminary Damage Assessment by means of CERT-trained bicyclists. A neighborhood drill was held on Sunday, May 1, 2005, at 4:00PM, with debriefing at Cicero’s Pizza afterward.

On a Saturday morning, **May 21, 2005**, several Fairgrove people participated in an exercise at the newly-placed ARK at Hyde School. Another city-wide communications/service response exercise, on **June 11**, provided training for John Skinner and three other Fairgrove Communication Team members. The headquarters site for our local effort was the ARK at Hyde. Nancy Burnett received a key to the Hyde ARK upon completion of the exercise.

On Tuesday, **November 29, 2005** Fairgrove leaders met with Marsha Hovey of the Cupertino Office of Emergency Services, Allan Gontang of CARES, and Catherine Moyer of Hyde School PTA. It was affirmed that in a real disaster, Fairgrove’s first responsibility is to respond to the needs of our neighborhood with the possibility of helping at the ARK once this is done. Information about the anticipated use of the ARK was also provided.

On Friday, **December 9, 2005**, Fairgrove leaders met with Joy Guy, secretary at Hyde School, who has Disaster Prep. responsibilities. We gained increased appreciation among us regarding our anticipated responses to an earthquake. Among other things, we learned that dismissal of students will take many hours and that the Hyde School field and gymnasium would not become a refuge for residents in the area until after that time.