

Planning a Tabletop with your Local Neighbors

Leaders of local neighborhoods working on preparedness often look for new ways to engage their neighbors and spur preparedness activity. Having a tabletop exercise is one way to get folks interested on engaged in how to be prepared. The follow is a guide and basic wildfire scenario deck to help you get a tabletop exercise ready for your community.

The scenario describes a basic early incident wildfire. This template is West County. A general initial briefing is included as well as two *injects* (an inject is additional information on the incident to create new discussion points for the group). Geographic elements are highlighted in yellow to make changing the scenario to fit your specific neighborhood easier. (Guidance available see contact below) Tailoring the scenario to your community will allow you to make the lessons memorable and applicable.

The follow checklist should help you stay on track and have your bases covered for a great exercise. Please feel free to reach out to Nancy Brown cell at 707 396 4033 or at Nancy.A.Brown@sonoma-county.org if you need guidance, advice, or a sounding board. We are in this together and hope to support you in your successful exercise.

Step-by-Step Guidance

- Each section is divided into segments that can be distributed as needed to keep people from getting ahead of the group. This ensures that everyone moves at the same pace. You can also print the entire packet and encourage everyone to follow along with the group rather than reading ahead.

Prep work Checklist

- Query your neighbors to gauge interest, this will also whet their appetite when they get more information.
 - What time of day would most prefer, and what day of the week?
 - *Date/Time*
- Identify what type of scenario would be most popular (Fire, Earthquake, Flood)
- Don't try to go too big, 5-20 is a great collaborative conversation.
- Pick a location – make sure the location is accessible for those who might want to attend. Assess tables and chairs – folks may need to bring a chair or card table. Aim for groups of four or five for the discussion and plan accordingly. So, for example, if you have 15 people you will need 3 tables and a total of 15 places to sit.

TABLETOP EXERCISE: WILDFIRE INCIDENT

- Where:

- Make decisions on providing refreshments or asking folks to “bring your own beverage or snacks”
- Create and send out invitations – try to pick a date at least 4 weeks away to allow folks to make space on their calendars. Be sure to include any directions or special instructions (e.g. come in the back gate)
- Review scenario template
 - All yellow highlighted areas can be customized for your neighborhood.
 - Make changes to customize including where the event takes place and evacuation zones affected by the event
 - Make sure your evacuation zone is not part of the zones with *mandatory* evacuation orders or you will have little to say except – let’s go.
 - Ask someone to review the new information for accuracy
- Call neighbors who have not responded to see if they can make it – a personal invite sometimes does the trick.
- Make copies of the scenario for each attendee
- Find someone willing to take notes
→ Who:

Important Information:

- What is an Evacuation Zone? Evacuation zones are pre-determined geographic areas that are used to efficiently evacuate residents during large-scale disasters. The agency evacuating residents will announce evacuation orders by zone number. By knowing your evacuation zone, you’ll immediately know if you need to evacuate or not when you receive an evacuation notice. These could be areas where you live, work, or attend school.
- Before you start the exercise make sure everyone in your group knows their home evacuation zone by going to this website: <https://socoemergency.org/get-ready/evacuation-map/> or using the QR code.



TABLETOP EXERCISE: WILDFIRE INCIDENT

Day of Event

- Arrive at the site for exercise early
- Make sure there are tables and chairs for all attendees.
- When passing out scenarios ask people not to read ahead so they can follow the same information together.

Scenario Instructions

1. Read the initial scenario and first set of questions out loud asking all to follow along
2. Give folks about 15 minutes to discuss (set a timer), and then have each group do a recap for the whole group of the ideas and discussion
3. Read the first inject
4. Repeat the steps above
5. Read the second inject
6. Repeat steps
7. After all injects have been discussed it is time to review ideas brought forth and work on finding a time to get back together to start a plan to capitalize on the ideas and take action
8. Well Done!

TABLETOP EXERCISE: WILDFIRE INCIDENT

Suggested Agenda -2-hour Exercise

Item	Who	Time	Time in Event
Introduction and Purpose	Host	10 minutes	
Individual Introductions	All	10 minutes	
Initial Scenario	Host	5 minutes	
Discussion 1	All	15 minutes	
Recap	All	10 minutes	
Inject 1	Host	2 minutes	
Inject 1 Discussion	All	15 minutes	
Recap	All	10 minutes	
Inject 2	Host	3 minutes	
Inject 2 Discussion	All	15 minutes	
Recap Discussions and Action steps	Notetaker	20 minutes	
Closing	Host	5 minutes	

→Times can be altered as needed

TABLETOP EXERCISE: WILDFIRE INCIDENT

Segment 1

Design

The design of this exercise is important to ensure that the location, attendees, scenario, and next steps all align to achieve Objectives and Outcomes.

Exercise Objective and Outcomes

- Identify strengths and gaps in community preparedness
- Assess and strengthen the neighborhood's social connections
- Understand gaps in resources at the local level (stuff and people)
- Identify ideas to improve group readiness.

No-Fault

It is important that this be a learning environment in which questions, ideas, and statements should be considered as viable and worthwhile at all times. Some topics may be addressed in a separate manner, with a follow-up *parking lot* (a place to write other topics of conversation) established to address these and allow the exercise to stay on schedule.

This exercise scenario occurs over a 5-hour period time on the initial day of a wildfire. Over the course of the exercise, there will be added pieces of information and prompts for discussion. Each prompt is designed to help you think carefully about how you would react, what you might need, and what you might do given the fictional circumstances.

Scenario:

Sonoma County had been placed in a red flag warning for a period of 48 hours based on wind, humidity, and dry fuel conditions. During this Red Flag Warning on Day 1 a lightning strike in the **Armstrong Woods** started a fire that ignited both the tree crown and on the ground brush at 8:00 am Monday October 17th. Embers from the treetops began to spread through the already dry area quickly. At first winds were very light, but within an hour the winds picked up to over 30MPH and the fire began to pick up pace. Firefighters were on hand, but the crown fire is making attacking the fire difficult for safety reasons. The current weather forecast is for sustained winds of 20-35 mph for the next 48 hours, with gusts up to 60 mph at higher elevations, and humidity of 20%.

Winds are driving the fire south and west. A SoCoAlert has been issued which includes Evacuation **Orders for all the lower Russian River Area**, and Evacuation Warnings for **Duncans Mills and Forestville areas**. Temporary Evacuation Points (TEPs) have been established at the **Finley Center in Santa Rosa and Santa Rosa Veterans Hall**. Although

TABLETOP EXERCISE: WILDFIRE INCIDENT

TEPs have been established many are heading to the Sebastopol area and parking their RVs in local spots.

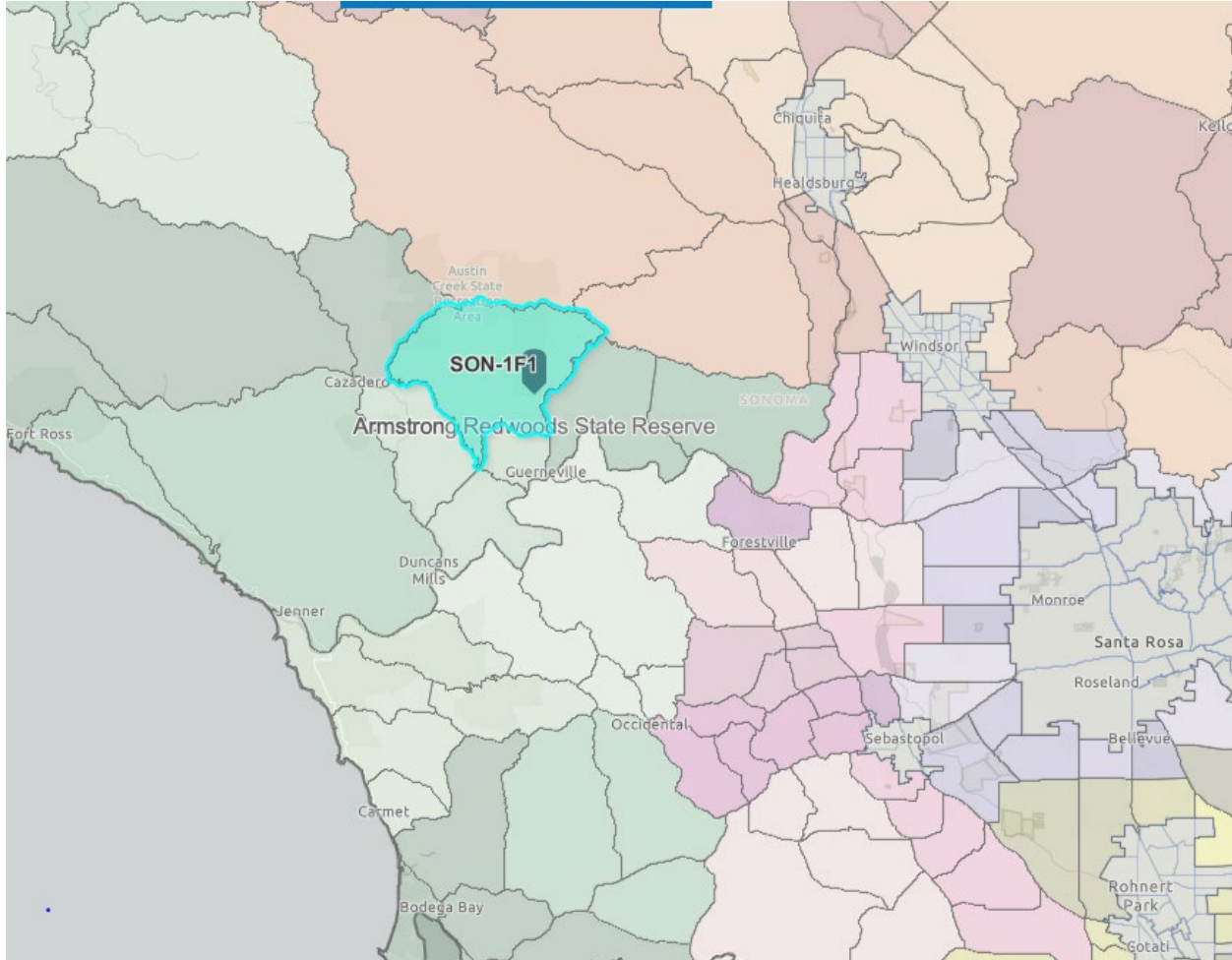
Current Evacuation Orders SON 1F1, 1G1, 1G2, 1F2, 1F4

Current Evacuation Warning SON 1E2, 1J2, 4D2, 4D1, 4B1, 4A1, 1J3, 1J1

Shelter Operations locations are not yet announced. All community members (not being evacuated) are being asked to stay off roads in West County to ensure fire and law enforcement have room to work. Smoke in the West County area is already heavy, people are being warned to close windows and stay indoors and out of the smoke.

News reports mention a few people who are sensitive to smoke have gone to the ER in Santa Rosa. The County has opened its EOC. Cell phones and other communications systems are operating fully in the Sebastopol area, but many are without communications closer to the fire. Power is also working in the Sebastopol area.

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- (Go to <https://socoemergency.org/get-ready/evacuation-map/> and take a screenshot of your scenario area or delete the picture)
- The purpose of this map is to show your evacuation zone and to give a visual of where and how far the wildfire is from your zone

Initial discussion

For the next 15 minutes gather in groups of four or five and discuss the following questions. Be prepared to share your findings with the wider group.

- Given the situation, what do you feel are the three most important actions you want to take now? Be specific, for example reach out to neighbors how? Door knock, text?
- What might be your biggest challenges should the fire progress to your area?
- Who in your neighborhood might need information or assistance?

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Segment 2

10:45 am Day 1 (2 hours and 45 minutes later) Armstrong Woods Fire

Although the fire is moving slower than projected the previous **Warning Areas (Duncans Mills and Forestville areas)** have been added to the **Mandatory Evacuation Order**. The wind is holding steady at 20 mph. Firefighters are working hard to halt progress in the residential communities.

Evacuation Warning Orders now include:

SON 4C1, 4F1, 4E4, 4E2, 4E3, 4E1 4E4, 4G5, 4G4, 4G3, 4G2, 1L2, 4H1, 4G1

Cell service has become spotty in most of **West County** and power outages have been reported in all areas of **West County** near the river. Public Radio is broadcasting news from the incident without breaks. **Sebastopol** has power and most cell services are operational.

Shelter Operations have opened at **Santa Rosa Veterans Hall**, with livestock animals being welcomed at **Sonoma County Fair Grounds**. Animals (pets) in cages are okay at the Shelter.

News reports discuss long lines of people purchasing supplies and water. People are still being asked to stay off **West County** roads unless they are evacuating. ACS (Auxiliary Communications Service) is supporting operations at several locations.



- Hospitals – No information
- Shelters – One open at **Sonoma Veterans Hall -Animals at Sonoma Fair Grounds**
- Roads – **River Road is closed 116 is closed at Guerneville Rd**
- Buildings – no confirmed reports
- Communications – Spotty in areas, failed in others (Evacuation Zone)
- Public Information – available on Radio everywhere, through internet and TV in areas not in Evacuation Zone

TABLETOP EXERCISE: WILDFIRE INCIDENT

Inject 1 Questions:

Gather in groups of four or five and discuss the following questions for the next 15 minutes. Be prepared to share your findings with the wider group.

- Consider the possibility of your zone becoming part of the mandatory evacuation area, what should you do now to prepare for that possibility?
- Are there people outside your neighbors you should be contacting? Why?
- What about your pets and animals, what actions should you take now?

TABLETOP EXERCISE: WILDFIRE INCIDENT

Segment 3

12:45 pm (2 Hours later)- Day 1 **Armstrong Woods Fire**

Fire has continued slowly. No new mandatory evacuation areas have been called but evacuation warnings have been expanded to include the following:

SON 4G6, 3K2, SEB 001

There is no new wind information (that the wind will die down or escalate) today. News reports state several dwellings in the **Russian River** area have been lost but exact numbers have not been provided by any agencies at this point. All reports on TV show the same image of a small cabin on fire.

The air is thick with smoke. News reports are asking people to be cautious and restrict activities in general due to smoke. **River Road is** closed to through traffic, only those evacuating is allowed. **Hwy 116 is** also closed to traffic at **Guerneville Road**. Some local stores in the **Forestville and Sebastopol** areas are closing due to power, inventory, or concern for staff health. Gas Stations are crowded with lines all over the county. RVs are parked all over the **West County roads leading out of Sebastopol**. Social media is crowded with reports from locals and others about their experiences. Local ham groups are up and running, communicating important details between them regarding the incident.

- **Hospitals** – Smoke-sensitive people have been admitted to **Santa Rosa Hospitals**
- **Shelters** – One open at **Sonoma Veterans Hall -Animals at Sonoma Fair Grounds**
- **Roads** – **River Road is closed, 116 is closed at Guerneville Rd**
- **Buildings** – no confirmed reports
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Inject 2 Questions:

For this set of questions please divide into three groups for the next 5 minutes. Each of you will represent a neighborhood in different evacuation zones with a specific task to accomplish in your discussions.

Group 1: **SEB 002** – Your neighborhood group has been communicating via text and GMRS radio since the beginning. In your neighborhood you have two people in different homes who do not drive (Jack and Susie) and one person with a mobility disability (Henry) who does have a care giver assistant on most days. Today Henry's care giver is not available. Jack's son lives in Guerneville and has been evacuated. His whereabouts are not currently known. Susie's partner is out of town so not available to assist Susie. You also have 3 Seniors over 80 in your neighborhood.

- How will you ensure everyone in the neighborhood can evacuate in a timely manner?

Group 2: **SEB 003** -Your neighborhood has just gotten started with organizing and you have not yet identified all the potential needs in your community. You are aware of at least 2 neighbors, Hal and Roxy (same household), who do not drive. Power is out in your whole area so stores are also closed. Some cell services are working others are not.

- How will you determine neighborhood needs and solve problems?

Group 3: **SEB 004** - Your neighborhood has lots of evacuees in cars and motorhomes at the curbs of your area. You have two Ham operators and a GMRS group. Tension is high and neighbors are out talking in small groups on the streets despite the smoke. One of you just heard from a neighbor that your area is now in an evacuation order. This seems to have taken off on Nextdoor posts.

- How will you verify information about the order and let people know once you have verified?

TABLETOP EXERCISE: WILDFIRE INCIDENT

Hot Wash (Quick Review of Exercise)

Full Group

- What went well?
- What gaps in planning need to be address?
- What did you learn?

Other comments

Learn

Next steps

Full Group

- Based on today's discussion what are your next steps?
- Who will take responsibility for them?
- When should they be done?
- When should the group reconvene?