

Not My Fault: The blackout, resiliency and Blue Lake Rancheria

Lori Dengler/For the Times-Standard
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The blackout is already ancient history for many. You've moved on and life is back to normal. But many businesses (especially small ones) are still reeling from the effects of lost revenue and perishable products. Please don't forget about the blackout just yet – there are important lessons and learning them could make a big difference in how well we weather the next big natural disaster.

The first lesson – store supplies beforehand and note where you have stashed them. Food, water and medications should be at the top of your list. Add batteries, portable radio and those convenient solar lamps (available at hardware and sporting goods stores). Consider refilling your gas tank when it hits the half empty mark and always keep some emergency cash on hand. Make it a habit twice a year to take inventory and check that everything still works. Use the ShakeOut in October and Tsunami Week in March as a good times to review supplies.

Communication is the next priority. We are accustomed to instant information on personal devices, computers and media services. The inability to learn WHAT IS GOING ON was an additional blackout frustration. Cell service still functioned – sort of. But without WiFi, the cell network had much less capacity. And, clogged with more than the normal number of users, it became very slow. If you rely on cell phones as your primary means of communicating, you need a back up plan. And just because cell service was still available during the blackout, it probably won't in the next earthquake.

Personal preparedness actions are important but community efforts are essential to easing impacts, reducing discomfort and promoting recovery. The Blue Lake Rancheria was a shining example of how resiliency planning can work. You've read about the micro-grid in this paper (TS 10/11). A number of people have said – gee, why can't we all do that. I agree. But it's not a simple undertaking. The Rancheria micro-grid was years in the making and required resources and effort from both the Rancheria and the Schatz Energy Research Center. No question that this will be discussed in many communities and at local and state jurisdictions. Moving

it forward requires your continued interest. Write/call email elected officials.

The electric grid was not the only role the Blue Lake Rancheria played in last week's power outage and regional response. Two years ago, the Rancheria began hosting FEMA training classes through a Tribal Homeland Security Grant. Before then, North Coast emergency management personnel had to go out of state to take required training classes, eating up time and energy in travel. About 1000 students have now graduated from classes at the Rancheria, earning it the nickname "Emergency Management Institute of the West Coast". It's not just tribal personnel who attend classes – they serve everyone who needs the required training.

The Blue Lake Rancheria's reputation for offering top quality courses with local relevance has grown, and now out-of-state people come here. I credit both the Rancheria's philosophy of community service and the efforts of emergency manager Anita Huff. Anita had worked in the emergency field at the Rancheria for decades when, in her words, she was "voluntold" to be the emergency manager in 2015. More than up to the challenge, she found creative ways to establish the Rancheria's Resiliency Training & Innovation Center. In her words, "It's a trust issue. We welcome anyone with open arms, as when the region or other tribal nations are prepared it makes our resiliency multiply!!

Last spring the Redwood Coast Tsunami Work Group got a grant through California's Earthquake Country Alliance to develop some preparedness PSAs. We partnered with PBS North Coast to produce six 30-second spots now airing on KEET. When I was scratching my head for possible locations, I thought of the Blue Lake Rancheria. I contacted Anita and asked if she wouldn't mind us bringing some cameras into the Casino and filming a spot. Jackpot! You can see the result at <https://youtu.be/Vkb5wUxc6o>.

Blackouts are easy compared to earthquakes. Thirty years ago today, the SF Bay Area was struck by the M6.9 Loma Prieta earthquake. Sixty-three people died, over 3600 were injured and losses reached over \$6 billion. First priority is to survive and avoid injury. Jim Goltz, a colleague of mine, studied what caused harm. The one thing that jumped out in his data was how far people moved during the shaking. If you crouch in one spot, you are far less likely to be hurt than if you allow your instincts to take over and run outside. Today is the Great ShakeOut and you can put that lesson to work by participating in a Drop, Cover and Hold On drill whether

you are at work, home, school or elsewhere. KHUM radio (104.3/104.7 FM) and KMUD (91.1 FM) will be airing the drill broadcast. The drill is scheduled for 10:17 am.

I'm in Oregon this week. But earthquakes can happen anywhere. Every state and territory in the US along with several other countries are participating (<https://www.shakeout.org/>). So please join me and about 36 million people worldwide crouching under desks and tables and developing the muscle memory to do the right thing when the next earthquake arrives.

Note: All of the KEET PSAs are posted at <https://www2.humboldt.edu/kamome/resources>. Just scroll down to the video link. Previous Not My Fault columns are posted there as well. A big thank you to PBS North Coast, Donald Forrest and Phil Ricord at Wildberries in addition to the Rancheria.

Lori Dengler is an emeritus professor of geology at Humboldt State University, an expert in tsunami and earthquake hazards. Questions or comments about this column, or want a free copy of the preparedness magazine "Living on Shaky Ground"? Leave a message at (707) 826-6019 or email Kamome@humboldt.edu

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