

Deployment Cooperation!

By Karen Corscadden, CERT, ARES, Ham KM6SV

At the very northern edge of Santa Cruz County, off of Highway 1, is an area called Whitehouse Canyon. On Jan 2, 2023, the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office (SO) determined that the single road leading into Whitehouse Canyon (Whitehouse Canyon Road) would likely wash out in the next storm. Facing staffing limitations, SO asked for assistance from the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to notify this area that they were being issued an evacuation order to begin at 5pm on Jan 3.

CERT was rightfully concerned that communications would be very difficult in the area. So CERT reached out to ARES for assistance with communications, and also to inquire if we had anyone with a vehicle appropriate for the road that needed to be traversed (4x4).

After getting the request from CERT, and disseminating it to our membership, ARES leadership thought that Equine Evac might have more people with vehicles appropriate for the road. Also, of concern, what if there were animals in the area needing evacuation assistance? After being contacted by ARES, Equine Evac reached out to contacts that they had in the area and determined that there were indeed some animals in need of evacuation. Specifically, one horse and several pygmy goats.

CERT came up with a plan to get a vehicle into the area to deliver evacuation notices. Equine Evac came up with a plan to evacuate the livestock in the area involving the horse owner walking her horse 3 miles or more down the road to meet the trailer, as due to the condition of the road a horse trailer could not make it all the way in. And ARES came up with a communications plan to support both activities.

But as much as we can plan, we often don't know for sure how communications will be until we get there. Whitehouse Canyon was no exception to this rule, especially as the repeater that would have been our first choice, K6LY 2m in Monterey, is currently not functioning properly. The plan we put together involved a ham each with the CERT vehicle and the Equine Evac vehicle, as well as a ham posted at the base of Whitehouse Canyon Road where repeater access would hopefully be better. Our wonderful team of Debra, KM6HGI; Christian, AC3T; Sebastian, KK6FBF;

Karen, KM6SV; and net control Roberta, AJ6KN shared equipment around, taught each other to reprogram PLs, tried different repeaters and simplex frequencies, and even put up an Ed Fong roll up J-pole on a 20+ ft mast in order to keep communications lines open. Thankfully, the extra backup plan of trying some HF frequencies proved unnecessary as WB6ECE 2m repeater on Mt Toro worked fairly well at the base of Whitehouse Canyon and simplex was able to relay from there into the canyon. The entire team was flexible and rolled with the communications and other plan changes until we got to something that worked.

In the end, a request for CERT support turned into a three-organization activation with two different objectives that were both successfully executed on, delivering evacuation orders and livestock evacuation. It is a testament to the great relationships that our volunteer DSW organizations have with each other and our drive to do the job correctly, not just to do the minimum requested that led to a very smooth, successful activation in Whitehouse Canyon on Jan 3, 2023.

