



MONTHLY UPDATE

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In this newsletter:

Notes From The
Program Manager
Pages 01 & 2

Deployments
Pages 02, 03, and 04

UAS News
Pages 05 and 06

sUAS Grant Request Filled
Page 07

Taking Stock
Page 08

CERT Basic Training Update
Page 09

Where Does The Time Go?
Page 09

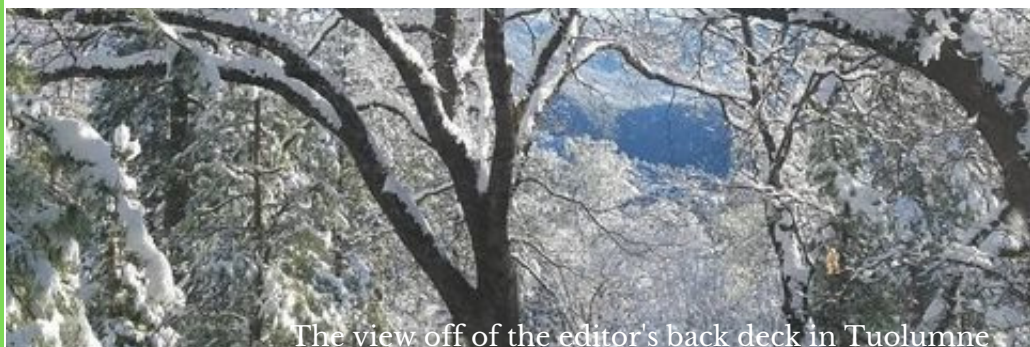
Staying Safe On The Road
Pages 10 and 11

NOTES FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

by Carol Hallett

A new year, a new beginning and as I write this I look out my window to the new fallen snow, white as far as the eye can see. For a color, white holds a lot of symbolic power in many western cultures as emblematic of goodness and purity...what a glorious place to live. Winter has finally arrived and Mother Nature decided to put it in overdrive! It is enjoyable to watch from our windows but if you have to go out please be careful.

THA-CERT have been very busy this month, as you will see in this newsletter. As the Program Manager for this team of volunteers, I could not be more proud of the new things we accomplish. Starting something new brings new opportunities and it can be empowering. You will probably learn important lessons about yourself. And your new beginning may just be the start of something exciting and life-changing. CERT continue to grow and find new ways to support our community. It is very heartwarming to see the community spirit alive and well.



The view off of the editor's back deck in Tuolumne

DEPLOYMENTS

by Mary Schreiner, Traffic/Crowd Control Unit Leader

The big news this month is, of course, the COVID-19 vaccines. Tuolumne County Public Health received doses of both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines. Some of the vaccine was redistributed to our neighboring counties as part of the statewide distribution plan, and vaccinations have been administered to individuals according to the State's phased plan. Vaccines administered under Phase 1A were given to healthcare workers, both at Adventist Health Sonora and employees of long-term care facilities. Also eligible under Phase 1A are residents of long-term care facilities.

Phase 1B targets those at higher risk due to their work in areas such as education, child care, agriculture, transportation, and emergency services. Public Health held a Closed POD (point of dispensing) drive-thru clinic on Friday, January 15th, at the Sierra Bible Church in Sonora. Over 400 people received their first dose of the Moderna vaccine that day, and CERT volunteers were on hand to help with traffic control and assisting in other, non-medical, areas.

A second clinic was held the following Tuesday, the 19th, which, some of you may recall as the day of "the big blow". High winds blew away pretty much everything that wasn't nailed down...and a few things that were! But our CERT members don't let a little wind get them down and many more members of our community were able to receive their vaccines.

Both clinics went off with very few complications and more clinics are being planned for the month of February.

Sierra Bible Church donated the use of their facility and it worked out perfectly for this type of clinic. Other clinics may be held at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds, depending on the weather.

Adventist Health Sonora are also holding COVID-19 vaccine clinics. Sign up with Adventist Sonora to get an appointment. Information on the link to the Adventist registration are on the next page.

CERT volunteer Lise Lemonnier assists a community member who just received the COVID-19 vaccine



DEPLOYMENTS, cont'd

The Public Health website with information on the phases and tiers can be found here: <https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1317/COVID-Vaccine>

If you are interested in getting vaccinated against COVID-19 in Tuolumne County, please sign up on one or both lists below. Important note: Submitting your name on these lists does not guarantee an appointment for a vaccine at this time.

1. Tuolumne County Public Health Department vaccine inquiries

a. Navigate online to <https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1317/COVID-Vaccine>, navigate to the bottom of the page and click on “VACCINE INTEREST FORM”, complete the form and click on “SUBMIT”. This does not guarantee an appointment, but provides Public Health with your information so that we may reach out to you when it is your turn.

2. Adventist Health Sonora Hospital list

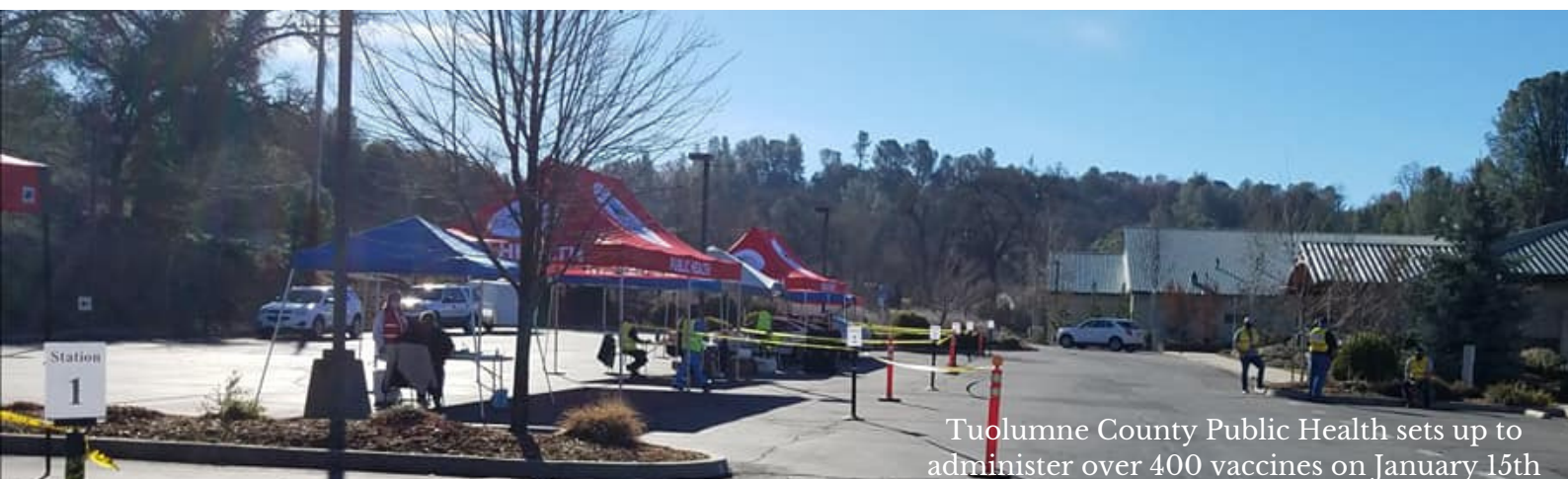
a. Navigate online to <https://www.adventisthealth.org/.../pat.../covid-19-vaccine/>, read through the information provided and scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on “Schedule your appointment”, answer the questions and follow the prompts to complete the process the click on “Submit”

3. If you are a patient at a clinic outside of the Adventist System Network of clinics, you should also call your own clinic for advice and information on their vaccination plans.

4. The Sonora VA Clinic may also be an option for some. For more information, navigate online to <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/> and read through the information and click on “Sign up to stay informed”. Then follow the prompts.



CERT volunteer Mike Mandell assists with check-in



Tuolumne County Public Health sets up to administer over 400 vaccines on January 15th

DEPLOYMENTS, cont'd

Our on-going deployments continue at Twain Harte School and Public Health.

Our THA-CERT members ensure students at the school are able to cross Twain Harte Drive safely every school day afternoon. It is an easy deployment and one that gives great satisfaction...from the children saying thank you every time they cross to the members of the community who drive by and say thanks, wave, and/or blow kisses.

It's hard to turn down something that gives such instant gratification. Unfortunately, several members of our Unit have had personal life intrude and have had to give up their positions in the crossing guard rotation.

If you have been looking for some way to give back to the community that does not require a huge investment of time or energy, crossing guard duty might just be that which you seek! One half-hour a day for one week (excluding school holidays, breaks, or "snow days"). The frequency of the rotation depends on how many people are volunteering, so the more volunteers we have, the longer between each rotation.

If you are interested in joining the crossing guard crew, please contact Twain Harte Area CERT at twainhartecert@gmail.com.

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

-- Henry Ford



UAS NEWS

by Michelle Wagner, sUAS Unit Leader

Well, the UAS Unit has hit the ground (air?) running this month. Thanks to the team's hard work, we have accomplished quite a lot in a relatively short period of time:

Night Operations Training – Our flight crews completed our 1st ever CERT UAS Unit online training course! In an effort to comply with COVID restrictions on in-person gatherings and with an eye toward having our Unit response-ready before the next fire season begins, we began experimenting with online training options and created a Nighttime Operations training class. I am pleased to report our Flight Crews have completed the training (an FAA requirement) and have proven that this platform is a viable option for us until we can safely get together again. This will allow us to continue to prepare as a group, while allowing people the flexibility to learn at their own pace and at times that are convenient for them.

January 17th Scenario Training – Tony White-Ramos, Krystalyn Hodson, Nancy Stevens, and Michelle Wagner met at the Fire House for a fire scenario training. All of our previous training was evident, as we conducted a scenario briefing and had the truck loaded with all our equipment in 6 minutes. We had our equipment set-up and ready to go at our deployment site with an elapsed time of 17 minutes!! Way to go, Team!!

We set up at Vantage Point with the mission objective of familiarization with IR/Thermal settings in low light conditions. We had Krystalyn deploy to the Bible Church parking lot with an asphalt torch to provide us a target for our camera. She and Nancy both acted as Visual Observers, passing control to each other when the aircraft went out of sight over the trees. Our pilot, Tony, successfully located the heat source, obtained the GPS coordinates, and tried out various settings on the camera to determine what would likely be the best settings for us to use in the future. After Krystalyn extinguished the torch, we were able to test the camera settings on the heat signature of a person, as well.

A few small things were noted in our debrief; but, overall, a very successful training!

Secure Storage/Workbench – Lastly, thanks to the design genius and crew coordination of Doug Simmons, and the ability of Michelle Wagner and Randie Revilla to follow his direction (LOL), we are very near completion of our new secure storage area at the new garage building at Vantage Point. This will give us a secure area of our own to store all of our equipment. We will no longer have to compete for storage space in the closet at the Fire House, where we are constantly tripping over bunker gear and turnout boots! The new storage area provides us a place to store our aircraft and charge our batteries, as well as a place to perform maintenance duties. We will also have a little space to store our training and testing equipment. This project will allow us greater flexibility and much more convenience. If you would like to see a time-lapse video of the build, click here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sjB_4SxQotR11Oh2E_nk3gbnDvDeep-w/view?usp=sharing

All in all, this has been a fantastic and successful month. And more in store for February! Stay tuned...

UAS NEWS, cont'd



Nancy Stevens (front), Tony White-Ramos (back), and Krystalyn Hodson (right) set up the UAS equipment for training exercises



Doug Simmons (left) and Michelle Wagner (right) work on the new storage unit for the UAS equipment

Doug Simmons takes advantage of nice weather to work on the storage unit (below)



sUAS GRANT REQUEST FILLED

by Carol Hallett, Program Manager

In November, I submitted a grant request to Sonora Area Foundation (SAF) for 2 additional training vehicles and uniforms for the sUAS (small-unmanned aircraft systems) unit. This equipment is vital for the growth of our unit and will allow us to deploy safely when needed to support our fire fighters in Tuolumne County.

The grant request was not a single person endeavor but a collaborative effort by Chief Neil Gamez (THFD Chief), Michelle Wagner (sUAS Unit Leader), and myself, as the Program Manager of Twain Harte Area Community Emergency Response Team (THA-CERT). The request was for about half of the funds required for the project; a significant portion of the remainder has been committed to by the Twain Harte Fire Department, and the rest will be made up from funds from THA-CERT fundraising efforts.

It is the mission of THFD and THA-CERT personnel, who are trained in the use of the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicles) to protect the lives and property of citizens and first responders in full compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, including but not limited to, applicable State and Federal Constitution and Federal Aviation administration (FAA) regulations. The use of a UAV can support first responders in situations which would benefit from an aerial perspective and enable responders to detect dangers that could otherwise not be seen.

It has been determined by THFD Fire Chief Gamez that, for the safety of the sUAS crew members, we must wear a protective uniform when deployed. We submitted the grant request to SAF and received a phone call that our request had been granted in full. We are now able to train multiple teams and have uniforms that will protect our members as well as identify us as a unique support team to first responders.

A huge thanks goes out to SAF, who do so much good for our community.

One of our existing sUAS vehicles. The grant will provide more vehicles for training purposes.



TAKING STOCK

by Lise Lemonnier, Planning Section Chief

We have tried to keep track of all our supplies, but sometimes it just gets away from us. We have attempted to do inventory of the trailer annually, but you know what got in the way this year.

We finally organized a Saturday morning where several of us could get together to do inventory, and of course it was a cold morning. Mike Mandell, Matt Kain, and myself started the first shift at 10AM. We put tarps out because we had rain and snow the day before, and emptied all our cache bins out of the trailer. We kept them in Unit order, which did make it easier to inventory.

We also put together another shelf unit. The heavy cribbing blocks are now on a cart with wheels, and we can just wheel it out the back of the trailer when needed! We moved things around, putting another shelf unit on the left side, and a short one at the front, the cooling station fan is also right by the door.

Then, Carol Hallett and Mary and Bob Schreiner showed up and we began the dirty work of checking every bin to make sure we knew what was in it. I tortured Mary by bringing wet-proof metal clipboards. (Editor's note: metal clipboards in near-freezing weather are *cold!*)

We put everything back into the trailer and congratulated ourselves on how great it all looks and how much more floor space we have. Now if this sounds like it was fun to you, we have more to do...the Fire Fighter Rehab vehicle needs to be inventoried. Any volunteers?



THA-CERT's trailer

CERT BASIC TRAINING UPDATE

There's still time to take the online CERT Basic Training course! Our in-person (safely-distanced) training that had been scheduled for earlier this month had to be cancelled, due to the stay-at-home order. Now that the order has been lifted, we just need to find a day where decent weather is forecast so we don't get forced to cancel due to wind, rain, sleet, or snow. If you are interested in becoming a member of THA-CERT:

1. Send a note to twainhartecert@gmail.com if you want a manual to refer to during the online training.
2. Take the online course: <https://medicine.utah.edu/rmcoeh/about-us/outreach/cert>
3. Email completed certification to twainhartecert@gmail.com

You will receive your CERT ID number and will be enrolled for the hands-on portion to complete your training. As soon as we have a firm date for that, we will let you know.

WHERE DOES THE TIME GO?

Because a lot of our deployments include several of our members, it's easy to lose sight of how much time is being volunteered every month by our members. To help us better maintain an accurate accounting of volunteer hours, Lise Lemonnier, Planning Section Chief, has been given the task of obtaining hours from each Unit Leader and reporting the totals to Program Manager Carol Hallett at the end of each month. Hours are counted for time spent on administration, training, and deployments. The January totals are:

Administration = 200

Training = 32.5

Deployments = 199

For a total of 431.5 hours.



STAYING SAFE ON THE ROAD

Winter has finally decided to join us here in the Mother Lode and with it came high winds and heavy snow. Newcomers might not be familiar with driving in mountain winter conditions and others of us may just need a reminder of safe driving practices. And did you know it's illegal to drive with snow piled on your car? Snow falling off your vehicle can cause accidents or injury to those driving behind you. Always take the time to clear snow from the hood and roof of your vehicle before driving. Carry chains and a shovel with you at all times in the winter, in case of snow, and use your chains when required; the speed limit for driving with chains is 25 mph.

Here are some other tips from AAA for driving in snowy and icy conditions:

Cold Weather Driving Tips

- Keep a bundle of cold-weather gear in your car, such as extra food and water, warm clothing, a flashlight, a glass scraper, blankets, medications, and more.
- Make certain your tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread.
- Keep at least half a tank of fuel in your vehicle at all times.
- Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area, such as a garage.
- Do not use cruise control when driving on any slippery surface, such as on ice and snow.

Tips for Driving in the Snow

- Stay home. Only go out if necessary. Even if you can drive well in bad weather, it's better to avoid taking unnecessary risks by venturing out.
- Drive slowly. Always adjust your speed down to account for lower traction when driving on snow or ice.
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Apply the gas slowly to regain traction and avoid skids. Don't try to get moving in a hurry and take time to slow down for a stoplight. Remember: It takes longer to slow down on icy roads. Increase your following distance to five to six seconds. This increased margin of safety will provide the longer distance needed if you have to stop.
- Know your brakes. Whether you have antilock brakes or not, keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of your foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal.



Chain check point on Hwy 108 - photo from CHP-Sonora's Facebook page

STAYING SAFE ON THE ROAD, CONT'D

Tips for Driving in the Snow, cont'd

- Don't power up hills. Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads will just make your wheels spin. Try to get a little inertia going before you reach the hill and let that inertia carry you to the top. As you reach the crest of the hill, reduce your speed and proceed downhill slowly.
- Don't stop going up a hill. There's nothing worse than trying to get moving up a hill on an icy road. Get some inertia going on a flat roadway before you take on the hill.

Tips for Long-Distance Winter Trips

- Have your vehicle checked by an AAA-Approved Auto Repair facility before hitting the road.
- Check the weather along your route and when possible, delay your trip if bad weather is expected.
- Before hitting the road, notify others and let them know your route, destination and estimated time of arrival.

If you get stuck in the snow:

Stay with your vehicle: Your vehicle provides temporary shelter and makes it easier for rescuers to locate you. Do not try to walk in a severe storm. It is easy to lose sight of your vehicle in blowing snow and become lost.

Don't over exert yourself: When digging out your vehicle, listen to your body and stop if you become tired.

Be Visible: Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna of your vehicle or place a cloth at the top of a rolled up window to signal distress. At night, keep the dome light on if possible. It only uses a small amount of electricity and will make it easier for rescuers to find you.

Clear the Exhaust Pipe: Make sure the exhaust pipe is not clogged with snow, ice or mud. A blocked exhaust pipe can cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to leak into the passenger compartment of the vehicle while the engine is running.

Stay Warm: Use whatever is available to insulate your body from the cold. This could include floor mats, newspapers or paper maps. Pre-pack blankets and heavy clothing to use in case of an emergency.

Conserve Fuel: If possible, only run the engine and heater long enough to remove the chill. This will help to conserve fuel.



Vehicle snowed in after a recent storm - photo from Tuolumne County Fire Department's Facebook page