



MONTHLY UPDATE

December 2020

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NOTES FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

By Carol Hallst

December is a month of celebration, reflection and closure, this year is no exception.

Let us celebrate the positive things in our lives: health, family and friends. We are so blessed for each day; celebrating life is my favorite thing to do.

Reflection is our opportunity to look back over the goodness that happened this year. Giving back to our community makes me happy. Sharing those opportunities with our CERT volunteers is part of that great joy.

The end of the year is an opportunity to feel closure... putting things away and allowing our selves to have more room for all the possibilities that the New Year will bring. We all have our own ways to celebrate in December and one thing that might be nice to add to your list is to look up in the sky. The Christmas Star (also referred to as the Winter Star) is actually a dynamic planetary conjunction that can easily be seen in the evening sky over 2 weeks in the month. Jupiter and Saturn will move closer to one another - which will culminate in an astronomical spectacle on the night of December 21, the winter solstice. Enjoy!

PERSISTENCE PREVAILS

by Linda Postma, THA-CERT Fundraiser

I received a call from Carol Hallett our CERT Team Leader and Program Manager. She asked me if I would help her with a project. I agreed and then wondered what I just signed up for! Carol said, “we cannot do much fund raising right now but we have a huge need for medical supplies...could you see if someone is willing to donate?” I said, "sure!"

She gave me a couple of ideas and off I went to see what I could find for us. I made numerous phone calls trying to find the right group or organization that could help...and within those organizations trying to find the right person...only to find that they did not have the ability to help this year because of...yes you guessed it...COVID.

I made some inquiries at Adventist Health but our contact there had left. I would talk with one person and they would listen and say that is not my department but you could call so-and-so. I would contact them only to be given another name. Finally I was given the name Matthew Rose, Director of Community Integration. I recognized the name and when I explained to Matthew about CERT and our need, he said, “yes, I would love to help. What do you need and how many?” I got a list from Carol and she said, “if they only give us a few of the items I will be happy”.

I emailed Matthew the list and together we came up with a quantity. I was happy because we found the right organization and person to help us. Today, I received call that our items were ready for pick up. To my overwhelming surprise he filled our complete wish list. I filled up my car with about 10 boxes of medical supplies. This includes tape, gauze, band-aids, adhesive strips, earplugs, dressings. It was just amazing. These items are used for training new volunteers, practicing in simulations/drills, needed to restock our Fire Fighter Rehab vehicle and to stock the Groveland FF Rehab Vehicle. Thank you to Matthew Rose and Adventist Health of Sonora, you are a great asset to our community and to CERT.



BASIC TRAINING FOR CERT

by **Mary Schreiner**

As you may recall from earlier newsletters, an online Basic Training course was developed in Utah and accepted by FEMA as a viable source of training during COVID-19.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Online CERT is developed to provide the FEMA standardized 2019 curriculum to learners across the United States, meeting the lecture portion of the CERT training requirements.

If you are interested in becoming a member of CERT you just need to:

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.php>
3. Email completed certification to twainhartecert@gmail.com

Each person who wants to join THA-CERT or Groveland Area CERT can take this online course. This is a 20 hour course that has been reconstructed and condensed to about 12-16 hours on line with one day of hands on training.

You will receive your CERT ID number and will be enrolled for the hands on portion to complete your training on January 16, 2021 in Twain Harte.



New CERT members attend last January's Basic training

A FITTING MEMORIAL

When Ralph Geissler passed away on Fathers Day in 2019, Lise Lemonnier wanted to create a memorial that would tell people who he really was. Aside from being a husband and father, Ralph had a 30 year career as a CalFire Captain and volunteer at Twain Harte Fire Department. He was also an avid reader. As Lise recalls, "He loved to read...he'd read anything, even the cereal box". So, his family decided that a free "lending library" would be a fitting tribute. Lise and her children got to work building the free library and Lise's friend, Shirley Wilson, painted it.

You may have heard us mention Lise before, she's one of our most active CERT members and is always up to a challenge (we usually call her "a force of nature"), so when vandals destroyed the little library, Lise got to work and rebuilt it.

The library is very popular, especially now that library services are limited by COVID-19 restrictions. Lise reports that she frequently sees people using it when she drives by.

If you are interested in visiting the library, it is located in Eproson Park in Twain Harte, near the golf course. It is a lovely tribute to Ralph and a testament to the love of his family. Even if you don't need a book right now, do yourselves a favor and drive by. It's all decked out for the holidays with lights that Lise put on it.

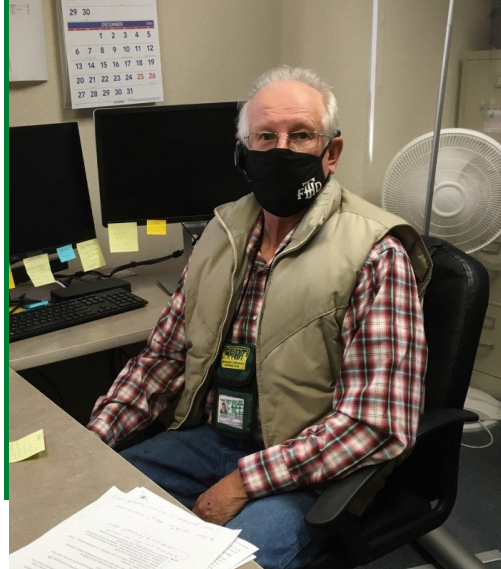
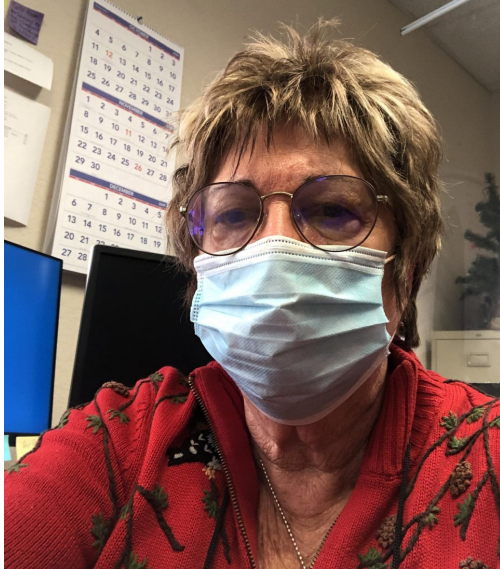


The memorial for Rapy Geissler at Eproson Park



DEPLOYMENTS

Our ongoing deployments of working the COVID-19 call center for the Public Health Department, providing crossing guards for students at Twain Harte School, and providing traffic control for the Twain Harte Rotary ATCAA Food Bank distribution helped keep our THA-CERT members busy this month. Nancy Stevens tried to get photos of all who volunteered to answer calls on the COVID-19 help line...thanks, Nancy!



Carol Asfar, Mike Mandell, and Michelle Wagner were just a few of the THA-CERT members who answered the COVID-19 Help Line in December.

The December food distribution with Twain Harte Rotary for the ATCAA Food Bank was, as usual, well attended. Members of the Rotary provided 59 families, a total of 148 people, with fruits, vegetables, eggs, butter, cheese, and bread. If you, or someone you know, need food assistance, please check the website for ATCAA at <https://www.atcaa.org/>



Cars line up at the community center in Twain Harte for the food bank distribution in December

UAS NEWS

by Michelle Wagner, sUAS Unit Leader

December is always a good time to reflect on the past year and I am so excited to be a part of both CERT and, more specifically, our UAS Unit. We have evolved from a great idea into a working Unit and have been involved in many ways, helping our local community. Beyond that, however, I think it is important to acknowledge how we are also helping on much larger scale. One example that comes to mind is our participation, about this time last year, with the THFD and a Bay Area-based start-up UAV company called Rain Industries.

Rain wanted to test their UAV delivery system in a wildland fire scenario. Basically, they deployed their UAV's to drop exploding balls of fire retardant directly onto a fire, which puts the fire out. THFD was on scene to build and tend the fire, while our UAS unit captured photos and videos for Rain personnel to study. The test was a success!

Rain has continued to improve on the original system throughout this year and hopes to make their system available next year. This system would operate autonomously and be able to use infrared technology to locate small fires and then put them out before they become large. These types of systems could make a huge difference in property and lives saved as California continues to be at risk from devastating wildfires. Our UAS Unit is proud to serve in any way we can and being able to play even a small part in something so big is something to celebrate.

Editor's Note: A recent article in The Daily Democrat highlights Rain and also quotes former Twain Harte Fire Chief Todd McNeil. If you would like to read this article, please visit: <https://www.dailydemocrat.com/2020/11/30/can-bay-area-startups-firefighting-drones-save-us-from-catastrophe/>



Former Twain Harte Fire Chief Todd McNeil meets with representatives from Rain Industries in December 2019

BABY IT'S (NOT SO) COLD OUTSIDE

by Mary Schreiner

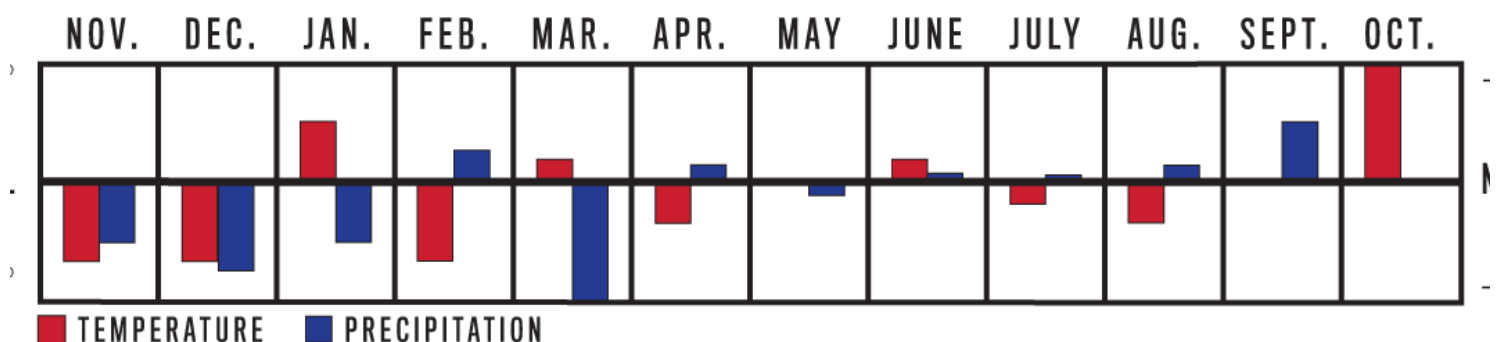
While it's nice to have fine weather for completing our outdoor projects, right about now people start wistfully reminiscing about snow. As this year has been determined to be a "La Nina" year, it looks like snow is a long way off. As a result, we all need to be especially mindful of fire safety, even though it doesn't feel like "fire season". Already, local fire agencies have had to assist with several escaped burn pile fires, which have resulted in citations for some of our neighbors.

Always check to make sure it's a burn day before burning by calling (209) 533-5598, make sure you have a valid burn permit, and always follow all of the guidelines for burning safely. To get a burn permit online, go to: <https://burnpermit.fire.ca.gov/>. For more information on fire safety and preparedness, please go to www.readyforwildfire.org.

Also, considering the extended dry forecast, it's always the right time to conserve water. The couple of nice rainstorms we've had recently might make some think that there's plenty of water to go around, but we're only at about 33% of normal for precipitation (as of December 22nd).

According to the "Old Farmer's Almanac", predictions for our region are: "Winter will be cooler and drier than normal, with below-normal mountain snows. The coldest temperatures will occur in late December, late January, and mid- to late February. The stormiest periods will be from late January into early February, mid- to late February, and late March into early April. April and May will be cooler than normal. Summer temperatures will be cooler than normal, with slightly above-normal rainfall. The hottest periods will be in mid-June and mid- to late August. September and October will be warmer and rainier than normal."

So, as the saying goes, think snow!



TWAIN HARTE AREA CERT, THE EARLY DAYS

by **Bill McManus, Founding Member**

Frances and I moved to Twain Harte, her childhood home in 2012. That next year the Rim Fire scared everyone, but also engendered a lot of community support for our fire departments and efforts to mitigate the danger.

In a couple of well attended community meetings it was proposed to start a local CERT. Chief McNeal, TH Fire Chief at the time, tried to get buy-in by other fire departments in the county, but was not successful. The only CERT in the county was a small unit of the Tuolumne Band of Mi-Wuk Indians, started by Dore Bietz who is now Coordinator of our County OES.

It was decided to develop a CERT for the Twain Harte area, sponsored by Twain Harte Fire & Twain Harte Community Services District but including anyone in the county who wanted to participate. Chief McNeal recruited Dore and Dennis Lewis, the leader of a large CERT in Calaveras County to help train the initial class. One of the first people who contacted Chief McNeal to join was Eric Marvel who was a nurse with a lot of experience. Eric volunteered to teach the medical part of the training, so was both a student and a teacher for that first class.

There were a dozen of us in that first class and it was quite the experience. After spending two weekends trying to stuff a mountain of knowledge into our brains, we were confronted by an awesome simulated disaster to attempt to put that barely acquired knowledge to the test.

We quickly selected a leader who said follow me as he charged into the earthquake ravaged building. It was filled with smoke and there were strobe lights and sirens blaring. People were screaming and pleading for help. We couldn't see anything above about two feet. Soon a team mate and I were trying to drag a two hundred pound fireman out of the building without becoming victims ourselves. We made all kinds of mistakes, but eventually got almost everyone out alive without losing a single CERT member.



Community Meeting in Twain Harte - January 2014

THA-CERT, THE EARLY DAYS, con'd

We were all exhausted but very excited. I remember that the next day Frances and I ran into Carol Hallett at the post office and talked for two hours about the experience. We discussed everything that we could have done better and really wanted to do the drill over again. Everyone was excited and I think 10 of the 12 members of that first class became actively involved in developing Twain Harte Area CERT.



Above: Marilyn Knudson, Wes Jordan, and Alan Wallace attend to "victim" Rich Knudson

Below, The Founding Members of THA-CERT

Back row (left to right): Todd McNeal, Doug Tucker, Eric Marvel, Susan Marvel, Gary Sipperley, Rich Knudson, Bill McManus, Francis McManus, Bill Schiavo

Front row (left to right): Wes Jordan, Carol Hallett, Marilyn Knudson, Alan Wallace, and Dore Bietz.



A NEW FACE FOR OES

by Dore Bietz

The Tuolumne County CAO's office has a new Office of Emergency Services Coordinator who started in December.

Dore Bietz comes to the County with over 12 years' experience in Emergency Services. She created the first CERT program in the County for the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians and is experienced not only as a CERT Program Manager for Tuolumne Me-Wuk Tribal CERT but as a CERT Basic instructor and a CERT Train the Trainer. She is active in statewide CERT, teaching Basic CERT to many tribal communities and teaches CERT Program Manager and Train the Trainer to other CERT programs throughout the State. She is a member of the newly formed National CERT Association. She bleeds green, as she will proudly tell you.

Dore is married to Mark Ferreira, Chief of Columbia Fire (who has taught EMT classes for Twain Harte Fire and teaches CERT right alongside her). Dore is also a 15 year member of the National Ski Patrol and you can often find her on weekends and holidays up at Dodge Ridge where she teaches the medical portion and the toboggan rescue to other patrollers.

Speaking of instructing..fun fact, Dore was also the lead instructor for Twain Harte Area CERT's first ever CERT class and remembers that first class and its founding members fondly. Just ask Marilyn Knudson how much she loves CERT! (I am sure there is a picture somewhere [editor: there is, see the group photo in the article "THA-CERT The Early Days"]).



New OES Coordinator, Dore Bietz

A NEW FACE FOR OES, cont'd

In her new role, Dore is the first ever full time OES Coordinator for Tuolumne County and her responsibilities will include:

- Plan, organize and coordinate the County emergency management program before, during or after an emergency.
- Responsibility to administer and direct day-to-day activities of the County's Office of Emergency Services in accordance with County policy and procedures.
- Responsible for the preparation of an Emergency Operations Plan, detailing mitigation; planning/preparedness; response; and recovery processes.
- Serve as Chair of the Operational Area Committee Chair when the Director of Emergency Services is absent.

Dore is excited about her new role and the opportunity to coordinate with all the groups, including CERT, to better enhance public protective actions, and promote domestic preparedness through a comprehensive and effective emergency services program that will mitigate against, prepare for, respond appropriately to, and quickly recover from natural, technological, and terrorist related emergencies that may impact the residents of Tuolumne County.

Dore can be reached at the Office of Emergency Services 533-5511.

COVID-19 VACCINES ARRIVE IN TUOLUMNE CO.

by Mary Schreiner

Yes, the long-awaited (or, it just seems like a long time) have been delivered in Tuolumne county. The first shipment of the first doses (both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require 2 doses to be administered to be fully effective). Tuolumne County Public Health have been administering the vaccines per the CDPH guidelines.

The vaccines are free of charge and will be distributed based on risk and level of exposure. The vaccines will be widely available later in 2021.



COVID-19 VACCINES, cont'd

Of the initial 975 doses received by TCPH, 200 were transferred to Mariposa County, as specified in the statewide distribution plan. The remainder of our allocations have been distributed to Public Health's healthcare and emergency services partners, which include Adventist Health Sonora, Oak Terrace, Sequoia Senior Living, PHI, Emergency Services, and local senior congregate living facilities.

These are the populations outlined in Phase 1a per the CDPH COVID-19 Allocation Guidelines found here: <https://bit.ly/34FvtQa> If you want to learn more about the COVID-19 Vaccine you can visit: <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines>

A WORD FROM THE CHIEF

by Twain Harte Fire Chief Neil Gamez

With the end of the dumpster fire, we call 2020 insight, we need to reflect on all the new changes we have gone through this year. As we do our best to normalize social distancing, mask mandates, quarantine, and stay-at-home orders, let us not lose focus on practicing fire safety this holiday season.

Christmas trees account for hundreds of fires each year. Typically, shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters, or matches start tree fires. Well-watered trees are not a problem. A dry and neglected tree can be. Here is everything you need to know about keeping your home and family safe from fires during the holiday season!



A WORD FROM THE CHIEF, cont'd

One of every three home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical problems. A heat source too close to the tree causes one in every four Christmas tree fires. December is the peak time of year for home candle fires. One-third of all candle fires start in the bedroom. Also:

- Natural trees should be cut at a 45-degree angle
- Place tree away from sources of heat
- Use only non-flammable decorations
- Inspect lights for frayed wire or other defects before use
- Do not leave lights on unattended; turn off all string lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Keep the tree stand full of water at all times (trees should have fresh green needles)
- When the tree becomes dry, discard it immediately
- Test your smoke alarms.
- Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Place Christmas trees at least 3 ft. from fireplaces, furnaces, or any other heat source.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections.
- Connect no more than three strands of mini light sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Blow out lit candles when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Do not burn Christmas tree branches or wrapping paper in fireplaces.
- Stay in the kitchen while cooking on the stove top.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 44% of holiday home fires start when decorations are placed too close to a heat source, like candles. On behalf of the Twain Harte Fire Department, we wish you and yours a safe and healthy holiday.

The Christmas Star