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# MEMORANDUM

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Date: July 7, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members  
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner   
County Administrator

Re: **Wildland Fire Preparedness**

This season is expected to be a challenge for Arizona in particular. I have asked Shane Clark the Director of the Pima County Office of Emergency Management to provide an overview of our posture as a County in relationship to the larger statewide wildland fire planning process as well as to detail the activities that we are engaged in to reduce the risks posed to this community. (Attachment)

JKL/dym

Attachment

c: Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator  
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator  
Shane Clark, Director, Office of Emergency Management



# MEMORANDUM

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Date: July 6, 2022

To: Jan Leshar  
County Administrator

From: Shane Clark *SA*  
Director

**Re: PCOEM Preparedness to Wildland Fires**

Per your request, the following outlines the preparedness steps taken by the Pima County Office of Emergency Management (PCOEM) for a wildland fire season.

The ability to support a wildfire response is one that PCOEM takes seriously and requires support from multiple sections within PCOEM and can involve other county departments. Preparation starts long before the start of the fire season. The impact of COVID significantly hampered how this department assisted in preparing our community to handle wildland fires. During COVID, PCOEM lost the ability to host trainings or exercises vital for our fire responders and key stakeholders. The Bighorn Fire of 2020 was challenging due to COVID restrictions yet rewarding because PCOEM was able to coordinate mass notifications messages for citizens to prepare for and implement evacuation. For the first time, the Incident Management Team's (IMT) managing firefighting efforts conducted community stakeholder briefings virtually and PCOEM played a key role linking the IMT with local key stakeholders. I am excited to report that today PCOEM is in full operation and the following internal sections play a pivotal role.

Plans. Pima County has been included in seventeen state and federal declarations associated with wildfires. Probability for wildfires remains high as reflected in 2020 by the National Interagency Fire Center where it ranked Arizona number three of the top ten states at risk for wildfires. Wildland fires are addressed in multiple county plans including the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), and Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP). Led by our Planning Coordinator, the EOP underwent a major overhaul and received Board approval in 2021. A comprehensive review and revision of the MJHMP with participation of key stakeholders to include the city, towns, tribal, and county is in final review by the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA) before delivery to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). An approved plan meets federal hazard mitigation plan requirements, and allows our community to be eligible for federal disaster assistance and hazard mitigation funding. An update of the CWPP is scheduled for later this year.

Training and Exercises. In-person training is thriving post-COVID and this department has hosted multiple courses focused on all-hazards emergencies and specifically wildfire scheduled by our Training and Exercise Coordinator. These courses are free to students and are important professional development for personnel that response and support emergencies. Courses include Intermediate Incident Command System, Evacuation and Re-Entry Planning, Advanced Incident Command System,

Shane Clark

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Public Information Officer/Joint Information Center, Science of Disaster, and Emergency Operations Planning. In March PCOEM facilitated an exercise developed by our Coordinator focused on Wildfire. Participation included partners from law enforcement (local, county, and federal), fire and emergency medical services (city, district, corporate, military, airport, state, and federal), National Weather Service, emergency management (city, town, county, and federal), Red Cross, Arizona Department of Forest and Fire Management (DFFM), Coronary National Forest fire management, DEMA, and utility companies. The National Weather Service, wildland fire dispatch, Coronary National Forest, DFFM, and Red Cross provided presentations. Several county departments presented on their responsibility during wildfires including Ready-Set-Go and evacuations, mass notification, wildfire and public health, the sheltering of large and small animals, and role of the Assessor reaching out to taxpayers after catastrophic incidents.

Community Outreach. Our Community and Outreach Coordinator ensures a wildfire outreach campaign to educate our citizens. A focus is on promoting through community events, social media, television and radio the mass notification system MyAlerts ([MyAlerts.pima.gov](http://MyAlerts.pima.gov)) encouraging citizens to sign up for emergency notifications. In many cases outreach includes information sharing from best practices. This includes the DEMA marketed and Pima County Sheriff led Ready-Set-Go campaign whereas citizens have an understanding of the hazards that threaten our community (Ready-), knowing when there is a significant threat in their area (Set-), and reacting when the danger is becomes imminent or life-threatening (GO-!!). Another is FEMA Ready.gov Wildfires, a campaign that educates our citizens on recognizing warning and alerts, family preparedness and creating an emergency plan, reviewing important documents, emergency food storages, and strengthening homes by creating defensible spaces and fire smart landscaping. Whereas this document focuses on wildfire, our Coordinator ensures similar outreach for other hazards that can affect our community like floods. The Coordinators role includes serving during emergencies as the departments Public Information Officer.

Operations. Readiness is led by our Operations Manager and starts with our ability to provide 24/7/365 on-call assistance. Staff may be required to work in demanding environments whether in support an incident commander or post-fire damage assessment. Our vehicle fleet allows for response in difficult terrain and PCOEM is outfitted with a mobile communications vehicle. PCOEM is integral to linking the IMT to key stakeholders, political leadership, agency administrators, and others for information sharing. Our Public Information Officer works with the IMT and can work with PC Communications for information sharing via messaging, social media and other medians to reach citizens and coordination of a Joint Information Center. PCOEM partner's with the Sheriff Department or local law enforcement and the IMT for evacuations and utilizes MyAlerts to warn citizens of impending danger via the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). For the Bighorn Fire, PCOEM working with partners coordinated over thirty mass notifications under the Ready-Set-Go program. PCOEM can connect the IMT with resources that county departments can provide. For the Contreras Fire PCOEM linked the IMT with the PC Department of Transportation when water tenders were a scarce commodity. PC Natural Resources Parks and Recreation provided a park for a fire base camp and a water supply. PC Department of Environmental Quality provided air quality information during the Bighorn Fire. During the Aspen Fire, PCOEM coordinated fourteen county departments and multiple other organizations to assist in support. This multi-departmental support especially when on short notice is truly "Team Pima"!!! PCOEM coordinates with the Red Cross Tucson Chapter when emergency shelters are required to shelter displaced citizens. Staff can communicate on the PCWIN radio network and our Technical Communications Manager can activate our OEM Communications

Shane Clark

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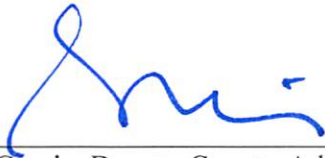
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Group (ham radio volunteers) to provide another layer of communications when needed. Post-fire, staff utilize the DEMA Survey123 damage assessment as a tool to document and photograph a damaged area. PCOEM manages a state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that can expand activation to support emergencies in our southern counties or serve as an alternate State EOC. By design an EOC supports resource needs and requests including allocation and tracking, coordinates plans and determines current and future needs, and provides coordination and policy direction. In the event of an activation, our personnel transition into roles within the EOC to include Policy, EOC Manager, Public Information Officer, Planning and Logistics Section Managers, Technical Communications, and Finance and Administrative support. The EOC operates under the National Incident Management System model of planning, logistics, finance/admin, and support services upon request to provide incident commander(s) the resources they require to successfully mitigate emergencies. The EOC can support up to 80 critical submit-matter-experts and decision-makers to assist in mitigation of an emergency affecting our community.

DFFM Post-Fire Flood Appropriation. Made available after multiple large wildland fires in Arizona in 2021, this appropriation of funds allows municipalities, counties, public safety departments and others to acquire needed services and equipment to better prepare their communities against post-fire flooding. Within Pima County, this has led to the purchase of flood cameras and sensors, swift water equipment, drones, and sandbaggers. PCOEM is the coordination department for Pima County between local partners and this allocation managed by DFFM.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Concur



Francisco Garcia, Deputy County Administrator

6 July 2021

Date