
January 19th, 2012

Washoe Drive Fire

2 - 1 - 1 Response Report

Prepared for:

The Executive Committee of the Governor's Partnership for Nevada 2-1-1

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The Washoe Drive Fire tore through Northern Nevada in mid-January. The fire would later be called ‘a near carbon-copy of the Caughlin Fire’ that terrorized Washoe County two months earlier, almost to the day. Responding to this fire were the same heroes that had been called into action in mid-November. The Washoe County Sheriff’s Office worked hand in hand with the Reno Fire and Police Department, Nevada Division of Forestry, Wild-land Firefighters, and Volunteer Fire-fighters to battle the inferno. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) called Nevada 2-1-1 and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) were also called into action to keep the community informed with the latest information, manage rumors, and keep our community together.

Nevada 2-1-1 handled 1,910 calls in response to the Washoe Drive Fire, connecting people to the latest evacuation boundaries, evacuation information, road conditions, animal control, recommendations for medications left during evacuation and more. For a full breakdown of the services and information given, refer to page 3.

Successes

The Washoe Drive Fire was the second wild-fire in which Nevada 2-1-1 was activated. This disaster was an opportunity to demonstrate the lessons we have learned from previous disaster responses.

Much like our response to the Caughlin Fire, Nevada 2-1-1 benefitted immensely from having both the north and south call centers online and taking calls, with all operators accessing the same information about the disaster via Nevada 2-1-1’s Disaster Portal.

Another victory for our response was the support that CERT and the EOC were able to provide during this disaster. Communication flowed between Nevada 2-1-1 and the EOC via webEOC, a web-based information channel; but information was not all that moved between the two agencies. In an unprecedented first, volunteers from CERT arrived at Crisis Call Center, the physical location of Nevada 2-1-1 in Northern Nevada while United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra’s Senior Vice President, Kelsey Piechocki, took up a



On January 19th, 2012, the mid-day sky was cast in an amber haze as strong winds tore through Northern Nevada. This time the wind was not refreshing, it did not bring with it the chill of winter as it usually would, this time it brought flames.

post at the EOC to help the flow of information.

During this disaster we were able to overcome an important challenge from our last disaster response: call routing. For the Caughlin Fire in this past November, we had an issue arise with routing calls to both call centers, resulting in a 38-minute period where Nevada 2-1-1’s phones were effectively unresponsive. For this disaster response, we were prepared and flawlessly

handled the routing of calls from one call center, to both, and back again to one for the overnight shift.

Since this disaster started mid-day during the week, staff had a chance to prepare by setting up some frameworks, calling in volunteers, and preparing for changes to call routing from just one call center to both. This gave staff and volunteers a running start going into this disaster, but it was not enough time to prepare for every scenario.

Challenges

The Washoe Drive Fire, as with every disaster response thus far, came with its own unique challenges. This time the main challenges arose, primarily, out of physical limitations, while communication issues did surface again.

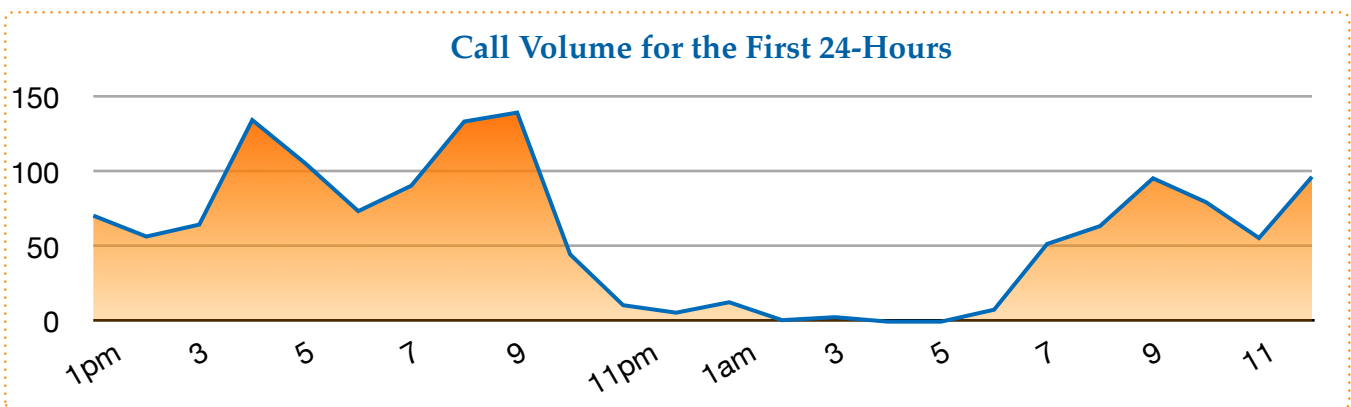
One challenge was the readiness and availability of computers for volunteers to use to access the online Nevada 2-1-1 Disaster Portal, which provided the latest information, detailed map of the fire boundaries, and simplified call logging to handle the increased volume of calls. Some of the computers were not setup completely, while positioning of extra terminals, by way of laptop, was debated for either increase usage of space or centralizing of volunteers.

Distribution of Calls During the Washoe Drive Fire	
EOC/Property Inquiries	30.41%
Road Conditions/Closures	27.85%
Medication Concerns	12.03%
Animal Services	10.76%
Emergency Services	8.23%
Utility/Gas Concerns	5.06%
Post Office Inquiries	3.13%
Crime Prevention Concerns	2.53%

This challenge posed a unique threat as the people setting up the extra terminals were the same ones that were tasked with updating the information on the Disaster Portal, leading to a brief time of slower updates.

In addition to the availability of the computers was the condition of some of them. As a non-profit, upgrading hardware is a delicate balance between ‘speed and funding’. Unfortunately, to get every volunteer connected online to the Disaster Portal, we found the balance was closer to ‘functional and funding’.

Another challenge cropped up late Friday until early Sunday. A glitch in our phone systems would intermittently send callers into a loop in our phone menu. This loop would happen without cause, isolating the caller, with no means to exit the loop.



Looking Ahead

The Washoe Drive Fire reminded all of us that community disasters can strike at any time. Some plans constructed after the Caughlin Fire Response had not yet been moved into action, when this disaster struck. This time we fully understand the immediacy of refining our processes and are actively moving forward in preparation for the next disaster.

Special Thank You

Kelsey Piechocki - *for deploying to the EOC, and you continued logistical support.*

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) - *for assisting our call center by helping answer calls*

Uncle Vinny's Pizza - *for the delicious pizzas to keep our staff and volunteers fresh.*

Port of Subs on North Rock - *for the wonderful sandwiches that kept us going late into the night.*

...and as always:

Thank you to all of our Volunteers and Staff!

Animal Rescue

On January 19th, the Washoe Drive Fire terrorized Northern Nevada. Many homeowners listened to the news at work, unable to protect their homes. But there was another crowd that was truly helpless, trapped in their homes: pets. Unable to escape the impending flames on their own, they watched the flames stalk closer and closer until a group of true heroes swept in to save them.

Those heroes were Animal Control. Called into action by owners, Animal Control emancipated trapped animals that were threatened by the blaze. Through the efforts of Animal Control over 100 animals were provided with safe shelter during this fire. Over 60 large animals were kept safe at the Livestock Events Center, while 50 small animals were guided to asylum at the DaMonte Evacuation Center.

Part of the disaster response for Nevada 2-1-1 was connecting Nevadans to animal control services, as well as informing them where they could locate rescued animals. Nevada 2-1-1 operators worked tirelessly through this disaster reconnecting pet owners with their beloved pets in Northern Nevada.