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# ***Lessons Learned for Long Term Recovery from the Charlotte Fire***

***- A State AND Volunteer Response Perspective -***

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Pocatello, Idaho

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# Overview of Presentation

- My Unique Perspective
- Charlotte Fire Facts
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ)
  - Actions & Lessons Learned
- Idaho Volunteer Organization Active in Disasters (IDAVOAD)
  - Overview & Actions
- Long Term Recovery Organization
  - Setup
  - Casework
  - Needs Assessment
  - Programs
  - Accounting & Reporting
  - Lessons Learned



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# My IDEQ and Volunteer Perspective

- Responsible for SE Idaho Emergency Response for State Agency (IDEQ)
  - Drinking Water
  - Air Quality
  - Water Quality
  - Hazardous Waste
  - Well Protection
  - Septic System Protection
- Local Volunteer lead for the Long Term Recovery Organization (LTRO)
  - Ensure Long-term Permanent Housing Available
  - Conduct Needs Assessment & Case Work
  - Fund/donation Coordination
  - Long-term Mitigation – Education and Awareness
- What this is NOT... Critique on emergency response actions



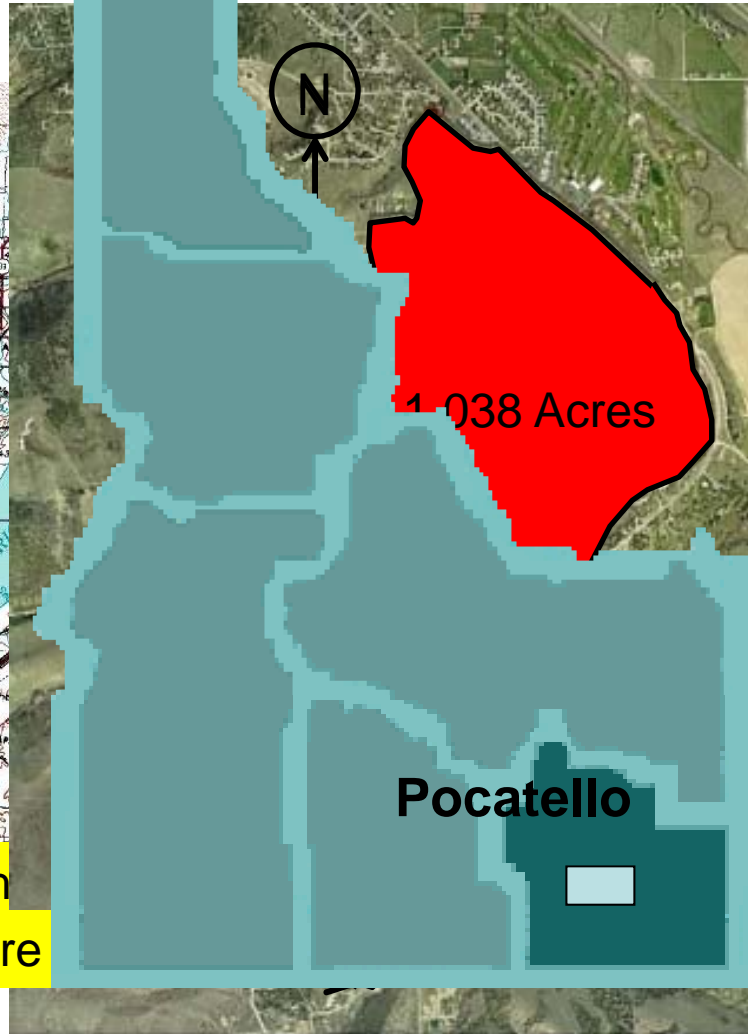
# Charlotte Fire Facts

- 1,038 acres burned on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012
- 1,000 people evacuated
- 60 Homes Burned
  - 59 Primary Homes Burned + 1 Rental Home
- 61 Primary Families Affected
- 87 Additional Lots Burned
- Fire lasted approximately 2 hours
- Most astoundingly, no major injuries were reported during the Thursday afternoon blaze!



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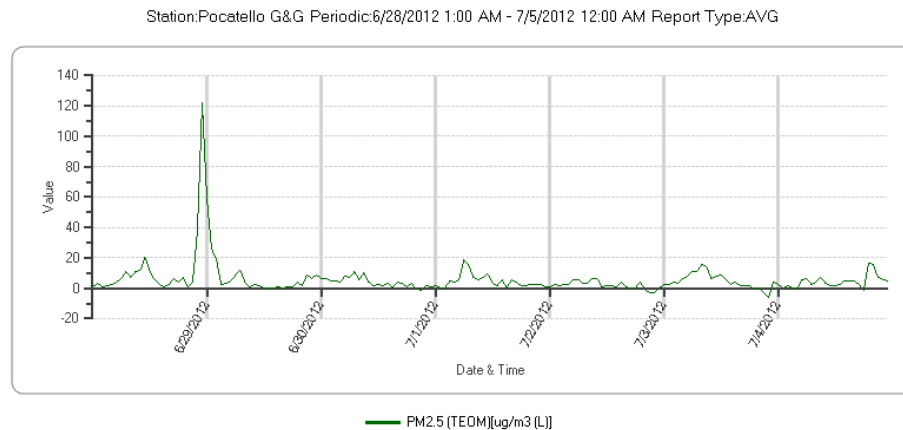
# IDEQ State Actions

- Coordinated with the Incident Commander
- Partnered with the County (Landfill Operations, Road & Bridge, Sherriff), NRCS, and Southeastern Idaho Public Health to disseminate information to fire victims
  - Sent Letter and Info Sheet to all residences summarizing erosion, public health and waste issues
- Posted letter at each burn site on water-proof paper
- Visited each burned home to handout out and briefly discuss the info sheet to better support the fire victims.
  - Handed out respirators to families working at their home site
- Attended periodic Community meetings for fire victims to provide information and dispel rumors.
- Met and/or communicated with affected water systems to offer help and support.
- Erected real-time air monitors - posted results on web
- Conducted periodic agency “check-in” conference calls.
- Worked with Bannock County Landfill to offer a special time for hazardous waste collection - DEQ voluntarily collected HHW and delivered the items to the landfill
- DEQ Hotline to offer advice



# IDEQ Air Quality

- Disseminated info of immediate fire/smoke hazards
- Monitored dust generation from cleanup activities
- Monitored secondary dispersion of ash via wind



# IDEQ Water Quality

- Long-term Monitoring of Erosion
  - Sediment loading to streams
- Engineering Support of Drinking Water System Repair
  - 3 public drinking water systems affected
- Well protection concerns



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# IDEQ Waste

- Hazardous Waste Deposition to Soil
  - Prevent heavy metals to gardens
- Waste water and septic systems
- Underground tanks



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# IDEQ Lessons Learned

- Cannot communicate enough!!
  - Requires letters, personal visits, community meetings, web postings
    - Pay special attention to elderly
  - Develop protocol to conduct more effective public meetings
  - Letters/meetings should contain ALL (multiagency) information
  - Need to utilize community groups to disseminate information to fire victims (i.e. church groups, lions/rotary clubs, etc.).
- Conduct on site visits - be good “listeners”.
- Cleanup involves unique items (e.g. unexploded ordinance)
- Staging a wood chipper near the fire footprint
  - reduces landfill impact and aids restoration activities.
- Agencies should consider the development of the Recovery Plan to institutionalize lessons learned and successful practices enacted because of this fire.
  - Need a Long Term Recovery Coordinator



# IDAVOAD Overview



COOPERATION | COMMUNICATION | COORDINATION | COLLABORATION

- IDAVOAD mission:
  - Bring together Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster within the State of Idaho.
  - Foster more effective service to people affected by disaster through cooperation, coordination, communication and collaboration.
  - IDAVOAD does not itself deliver services.
    - Instead, its members independently meet relief and recovery needs within the cooperative framework the organization makes possible.
  - Assist with BOTH Emergency Response and Long Term Recovery via *Idaho Emergency Response Plans*

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# IDAVOAD Responsibilities

- IDAVOAD Emergency Actions:
  - Coordinate support for unmet needs of individuals during **response** with volunteer agencies
  - Provide emergency first aid, counseling, feeding, sheltering, or other services as deemed necessary by Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
  - Provide casualty and patient info & connect disaster victims to family
  - Manage mass care logistical and related fiscal activities
  - Provide blood and blood products



# IDAVOAD Responsibilities

- IDAVOAD Short and Long Term Recovery Actions:
  - Coordinate support for unmet needs of individuals during **recovery** with volunteer agencies
  - Coordinate donations specifically solicited by IDAVOAD organizations
  - Provides procedures for acceptance/disposition of unsolicited donations
  - Manage Donation Warehouse
  - Manages unsolicited food donations
  - Member of interagency hazard mitigation team, site visit, risk assessment, loss reduction strategy
  - Coordinate mitigation outreach
  - Participate in Long Term Recovery Organization



# IDAVOAD Actions

- Charlotte Fire Emergency Response
  - Initial Emergency Response well coordinated
  - *Not Declared a State Disaster Area*
  - Activated & fulfilled response plans:
    - Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, and Housing and Human Services - (Emergency Support Annex Function (ESAF) #6)
    - Public Health and Medical Services - (ESAF #8)
    - *No declaration required.*
  - Non-activated response plans:
    - Volunteer and Donation Management - (Support Annex #4)
    - *No declaration required.*



# IDAVOAD Actions

- Non-activated response plans (con't):
  - Long-term Community Recovery and Mitigation - (Emergency Support Annex Function #14)
    - IBHS to coordinate local, state, federal and voluntary agency programs that address recovery needs of public infrastructure, citizens, and private sector.
    - **Requires State Disaster Emergency Declaration (Governor)**
    - Short-term Recovery (up to 3 months)
      - » Overlaps with emergency response
      - » Restoring utilities and essential services, transportation, health and safety services, food and shelter
    - Long-term Recovery (longer than 3 months)
      - » Rebuilding homes, replacing property, resuming employment, repairing public infrastructure, & restoring businesses
    - Mitigation
      - » Reduces communities' vulnerability to future impacts of disaster



# IDAVOAD Actions

- If you do not activate the Long-term Community Recovery and Mitigation - (Emergency Support Annex Function #14):
  - No IBHS coordination of State or Local Governments for Long-term recovery
  - Volunteer Organizations unsure of where to “plug in”
  - No turnover of emergency response information
  - IDAVOAD initiated a LTRO response anyway...why?
    - To assist residents with everyday needs
    - Assist in the dissemination of community aid





# Long Term Recovery Organization

- The 2012 Idaho Wildfire Long Term Recovery Organization's (LTRO) purpose:
  - Provide and/or assist in a coordinated recovery effort to the homeowners who lost their **primary** residence in the Charlotte Fire in Pocatello.
  - Conduct base-line case work with Charlotte Fire residents to document long term or unmet needs.



# LTRO Setup

- LTRO created by IDAVOAD on July 25, 2013
  - Eastern Idaho VOAD just started
  - Used National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) guidance
- Executive Committee
  - Wade Gayler - Idaho Regional Emergency Services Director of the American Red Cross – Chair
  - Bruce Olenick – Idaho Department of Environmental Quality - Vice-Chair
  - Heidi Novich – Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security - Secretary
  - Phil Blick – Idaho State University – Retired – Treasurer
- General Membership – Existing IDAVOAD/EIDVOAD organizations
- Created Operating By-laws
  - **Mission Statement:** Provide spiritual, emotional, and physical resources to those affected by the disaster regardless of race, creed, color, gender, disability, or religious preference. We seek to respond to needs not met by relief systems through existing non-profit organizations.



# LTRO Casework

- Hired part-time case-worker to conduct an initial screening of the people who lost their primary residents to the fire.
  - **60 homes destroyed** (59 primary residents);
  - 2 renters impacted;
  - 87 additional property owners affected (loss of outbuildings, trees, fencing, etc.).
  
  - Plan on rebuilding: 43 (38 completed/under construction)
  - Not rebuilding: 16
  - Undecided: 1
  - **Total:** **60**
  
  - Renters at the time of fire: 2
  - Uninsured: 1



# LTRO Needs Assessment

- No families were in need of the immediate necessities of food, shelter, and clothing.
  - These needs were met by family, friends, the community, the American Red Cross, and/or the insurance companies
- LTRO matched some of initial needs with available resources offered by volunteer organizations to those impacted by the fire such as counseling, wood removal, etc.



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# LTRO Needs Assessment

## Long-term needs (Fall 2012)

- Need that may apply to all residences that will rebuild:
  - Permit fees
- Common needs that may apply to most residences:
  - Soil erosion
  - Re-vegetation/reseeding
  - Chipping wood
- Needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis:
  - Kitchen Wares
  - Clothing
  - Trenching/Back Hoe
  - Landscaping
  - Tree removal
  - Financial counseling
  - Debris removal



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# LTRO Programs

- Reviewed applications for aid and distributed resources:
  - 54 families applied for assistance (\$775 per family)
  - 8 families do not want aid or do not qualify for aid.
- Organized long-term erosion control help for individual property owners
- Organized a discount program for landscaping and contracting needs
  - 6 vendors participating for discounts on trees, sod, landscaping hardware, stone, etc.
  - Disseminated over 1,000 trees and shrubs for replanting in spring, summer and fall of 2013
- Organized a volunteer yard work/tree removal service
- Organized a stockpiling program for fill dirt



# LTRO Accounting & Reporting

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the LTRO and Southeast Idaho Community Action Agency (SEICCA) to act as the 501(c)(3) corporation fiscal agent
- LTRO collected \$43,600 from private donations
  - Distributed \$775 to 54 families
  - 100% percent of donated funds were disseminated to area residents who requested assistance.
- Collected two grants to cover administration fees
- Small percentage of funds (8%) reserved for:
  - 2013 Summer Picnic – over 100 people attended
  - Wildflower Seeds, Grass Seed, and Trees
  - Thank You Baskets



# LTRO Accounting & Reporting

- Final Report issued summer 2013
  - Summary of Actions
    - Number of families receiving help
  - Financial Statement
  - Recommendation for Future Work
    - Decreasing vulnerability
    - Increasing community resilience





# LTROs Lessons Learned

- Develop an established protocol for creating an LTRO in Idaho
  - Manual, Charter, MOUs
- Use IDAVOAD or EIVOAD as an umbrella
  - VOADs should seek 501(c)(3) status to handle unsolicited donations
  - Include LTRO templates in VOAD bylaws or operations plan
- Revise Idaho Emergency Operations Plan to clarify:
  - Long-term Community Recovery and Mitigation - (Emergency Support Annex Function #14)
    - May not need a State Disaster Emergency Declaration from Governor
    - Communications plan between VOAD and State
    - Better define the roll of the IC/Counties/Local Governments in Long-term Recovery
      - Improve turnover with Incident Commander and VOAD/LTRO
  - Volunteer and Donation Management - (Support Annex #4)
    - Very complex



# LTROs Lessons Learned

- Plan for another organization to conduct case management services
- Ongoing Mitigation by VOAD - Active education program for wildfires
  - Coordinate activities with local governments, FireWise reps, or RC&D



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# Pocatello Regional Office

Thank you for your gracious attention!!

Questions??



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