

# Health Officials Learn How to Improve Response in Disaster Situation

\* Continued from page 1

tures later.”  
It was the first full-scale drill run by Mrs. Della-Moretta, who replaced Ben Thompson last year. Her job was to work with the Incident Commander, the first person on the scene capable of coordinating the efforts of the various organizations involved. In this case, the incident commander was Bryce Tracey, 9-1-1 coordinator and fire department sergeant.

The St. Ignace Fire Department, acting under mutual aid agreements, called on fire departments from Brevort, and Mackinaw City. Departments at Hendricks and Clark townships were on standby. Extra ambulances from Mackinaw City were also called. None of these groups actually came to the drill, but in a real emergency, they would have been here, Mrs. Della-Moretta said.

Buses equipped with mechanical lifts were provided for wheelchair-bound evacuees, who were taken to Little Bear East Arena and Conference Center, the designated evacuation site for St. Ignace.

Mr. Tracey said he was impressed when he arrived at the fire 10 minutes after the alarm was sounded and saw that the hospital staff already had evacuated nearly

everyone from the unit.

The fire department had deliberately delayed its response to simulate the reality that, in a town with a volunteer fire department, it takes extra minutes for members to get from their regular jobs to an emergency.

“We are trained to pull people out of burning buildings,” he said. “This is time consuming and exhaustive for firefighters, but the hospital staff had already evacuated the residents, so we were able to get right in there and concentrate on the fire.”

“It was impressive to watch the hospital staff react when the alarm went off,” said City Manager Eric Dodson, who was there to evaluate the staff’s effectiveness during the drill.

“They knew where they needed to be, and they got there quickly,” he added.

Hospital staff said the evacuation was complete only five minutes after the alarm went off.

To make the drill more realistic, and difficult, Mrs. Della-Moretta added problems to the scenario. She directed two students to hide in closets, for example, simulating confused and scared residents trying to avoid the commotion of the evacuation. According to Mr. Dodson, the

staff found and evacuated them in roughly 30 seconds.

While Mr. Dodson looked on, firefighters crept into the evacuated facility, staying close to the ground, a method they employ to avoid rising smoke and heat.

Throughout the drill, each organization was linked with radios tuned to a “special event channel.” Mrs. Della-Moretta used it to keep all players in communication.

By 11:30, the fire was reported spreading toward the emergency room and the hospital was ordered to move it to the Zion Lutheran Church.

Five actors posing as seriously injured residents were sent there. The rest were evacuated to a Red Cross station set up at Little Bear East, where families of residents could also go to check on their loved ones.

Barb Davis, the hospital’s quality control director who was in charge of medical care at Little Bear, reported no deaths and that all burn patients were subsequently transferred to Community Memorial Hospital in Cheboygan.

Wayne Burnett was among the Red Cross personnel who manned the entrance to Little Bear and documented evacuees as they came in.

“People arrived before we were fully set up,” he said, but food and water was on hand. Soon, the room was equipped with cots for tired or injured residents, and nurses arrived from the hospital to help.

Again, pre-designed problems appeared in the scenario. Some evacuees did not cooperate with the Red Cross, for example, because they had been directed to act semi-coherent and upset by the disaster.

“Several tried to escape,” Mr. Burnett said, but Red Cross workers kept their eyes on them, conducted head counts every 10 minutes, and brought wanderers back into the shelter in a caring and gentle manner, he added. During this portion of the drill, the Red Cross volunteers realized that there were far too many unlocked doors in Little Bear East to monitor easily.

Joan Therrian, assistant coordinator of Emergency Services, evaluated the Red Cross and concluded that the Red Cross did well.

In all emergencies, real or simulated, certain things go wrong. Problems were noted in this drill, and the information will be used to make planning improvements before a real disaster occurs.

Tamie Hartwig, a member of the planning team, said there was good communication with other emergency services, but a breakdown occurred between the hospital and the nurses at Little Bear East.

Hospital personnel used walkie-talkies to stay in contact, but the devices weren’t powerful enough to keep in touch with the nurses working at the evacuation center. This problem will be dealt with internally, said Mrs. Della-Moretta. Most likely, the hospital will obtain some



Bryce Tracey (right), 911 coordinator for Mackinac County, is incident commander for the mock disaster at Unit One of the Long Term Care Facility at Mackinac Straits Hospital. Here he consults with Steve Therrian of Allied Emergency Medical Services.

type of high powered radios.

That the hospital emergency room was in the midst of dealing with several real emergencies during the exercise added to the sense of drama.

Another problem arose when Mr. Tracey tried to get Mrs. Della-Moretta involved in the exercise. As director of Emergency Services, she is a critical link in the management

of any extended disaster in the county. When Mr. Tracey called the 9-1-1 dispatch center, however, they were unable to page Mrs. Della-Moretta. They contacted the Mackinac County Sheriff’s Department instead, and the police were able to page her.

“It was good that this came up during a drill,” Mrs. Della-Moretta said. “The problem was fixed easily

the same day.”

A third problem was noted by Tim McKee, emergency manager and 9-1-1 coordinator for Chippewa County. Mr. McKee was on site to evaluate the fire department’s response, which was quite good, he said, but responders did not have a copy of the hospital’s floor plan.

Kathy Schacht, an English and drama teacher at LaSalle High School, oversaw the student actors. County Commissioner Lawrence Leveille evaluated the hospital maintenance crew, hospital security, and busing. St. Ignace Mayor Paul Grondin evaluated the ER response, and William Beethem, assistant emergency manager for Cheboygan County, evaluated law enforcement. All agreed the drill went well, despite minor problems.

As chair of the Mackinac County Board of Commissioners, the highest elected office, Dawn Nelson declared the situation a disaster and served as spokesperson, providing information to the media.

St. Ignace Police Sergeant Mark Wilk said the most difficult aspect of the drill was creating a true climate of realism. In a real emergency, he said, there would have been smoke and fire and people screaming, but planners could not add these details to the drill.

Emergency drills must not create serious problems of their own, he said, and above all, organizers must avoid causing real injuries.

To alert residents to the exercise, the event was announced in advance to Long Term Care residents and their families and to the public through *The St. Ignace News*.

## Mackinac Bridge Staff’s Children Visit



Children of employees of the Mackinac Bridge Authority enjoyed a tour of the facilities Thursday, April 27, shadowing their parents or grandparents. Pictured are (front, from left) Carley Johnson, Bryanna Litzner, Allison Gustafson, Shelby Litzner, David Neph Jr., C.J. McDonald, Ryan Litzner, Casey Maahs, Cody Maahs; (back) Cooper Johnston, Jason Brown, and Dylan Brown. Missing from the photograph are Angela Nowack, Lewis Steiner, Brendon Steiner, and Michaela Cope. (Photograph courtesy of Hilda Ryerse)



I would like to  
**THANK**

all my family, friends and supporters for everything you have done for me throughout the Primary Election.

We won the Primary with the most votes!!

Now we must carry this momentum onto the General Election in June. My platform has not changed and I will always be available to hear your concerns and work with our people.

Thank you again,  
Keith Massaway

906-643-6981    kmassaway@msn.com

Keith Massaway endorses this advertisement. Paid for by the Committee to Elect Keith Massaway



Try our  
**NEW**  
Strawberry Yogurt  
Super Sundae

Only \$3<sup>29</sup>

*It’s Strawberry Festival Time!*

Stop in and Try One of Our Delicious Strawberry Treats!



St. Ignace Big Boy    913 US 2, St. Ignace    906-643-1555  
Open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Daily

## TRUCKLOAD SALE

**Simmons® DeepSleep® QUEEN SETS**

Prices starting at

# \$499

Simmons® Beautyrest® PLUSH		Simmons® Beautyrest® DEEPSLEEP FIRM	
Twin, <i>so</i>	\$499	Twin, <i>so</i>	\$359
Full, <i>so</i>	\$549	Full, <i>so</i>	\$429
Queen, <i>so</i>	\$599	Queen, <i>so</i>	\$499
King, <i>so</i>	\$899	King, <i>so</i>	\$749

Simmons® Beautyrest® FIRM		Simmons® Beautyrest® SUPER PLUSH	
Twin, <i>so</i>	\$569	Twin, <i>so</i>	\$699
Full, <i>so</i>	\$639	Full, <i>so</i>	\$779
Queen, <i>so</i>	\$699	Queen, <i>so</i>	\$839
King, <i>so</i>	\$1049	King, <i>so</i>	\$1199

Beautyrest® Original Pocketed Coil® Springs provide unsurpassed motion separation



**DR. DAVID THURSTON**  
**CHIROPRACTOR**



**SERVING THE EASTERN U.P. & STRAITS AREA FOR OVER 15 YEARS**

Most Insurances Accepted  
OPEN Monday - Friday at 8:30 a.m.  
(906) 643-9940  
135 Bertrand St., St. Ignace, MI 49781

### Craft Store Opens

A Touch of Craft store in St. Ignace will open for the season Monday, June 5. Hours will be Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Occasional evening hours will be posted outside the building. The shop is run by volunteers and features senior citizens’ handmade items, including framed photography, greeting cards, seasonal wreaths, doll clothes, baby blankets and sweaters, quilts, maple syrup, pillows, birdhouses, kitchen items, and woodwork.

## Beautiful Boats! Performance Pontoons!



**Manitou**  
PONTOON BOATS

Seasonal Slips Available

**RENTALS AVAILABLE**  
in Pontoon & Ski Boats



Straits Highway North of Indian River—Just Past the Bridge Follow the Signs to Indian River Marina

## Everson's Home Furnishings

4962 Hwy. M-28 Newberry, MI 49868  
Phone (906) 293-5331

### Indian River Marina

3020 Apple Blossom Lane, Indian River

Hours: [www.indianrivermarina.com](http://www.indianrivermarina.com)  
9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Thurs.  
9 a.m.-6 p.m. Fri.-Sat.    **231-238-9373**