

Local Assistance Center- Phase 1

Solano County Office of Emergency Services established a Local Assistance Center (LAC), a “one-stop shop” for information and resources to assist survivors of the LNU Lightning Complex Fire.

The LAC operated at Solano Community College- Vacaville Center, 2001 North Village Parkway, Vacaville, CA from Sunday, August 30, 2020 through Saturday, September 5, 2020 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. CalOES provided on-site support.

A total of 349 unduplicated household visited the LAC. As the week progressed, several residents returned a second or third time because they either did not receive all the information they needed in one visit (some were too overwhelmed, and others ran out of time) or had follow up questions.

Front Entrance

When available, staff were stationed outside the front entrance to welcome residents. These staff were also used to help load sifting kits, bottled water and food into residents’ vehicles. This area was tented to provide shade.

COVID Screening

As required by FEMA, all staff, residents and visitor of the LAC as well as students attending class were screened for COVID before entering the facility by taking their temperature and asking a series of questions to determine if they had been exposed or had symptoms.

Comment: The process worked well. One student was denied access due to self-disclosed symptoms. To my knowledge, only one person objected to the temperature check but eventually complied.

Intake (Attachment A)

Residents completed a Client Intake form to obtain basic information about those impacted by the fire. This information was cross referenced against the CalFire list of damaged/destroyed properties at the end of every day.

Comment: Several LAC visitors completed this form, but their address did not appear on the CalFire list. It’s unclear if these individuals were providing support to a resident impacted, visiting the LAC to observe operations or for another reason.

Consider specifically asking the visitor if they had a property damaged/destroyed by the fire and cross reference them against the damage list prior to allowing entry or adding a question to the intake form to determine if they were directly impacted. There was not a negative impact to allowing entry to those not directly impacted. Cross referencing with the damage list would slow down the intake process and possibly create public relation problems if someone was denied access.

Consider staffing navigators at Intake to walk people through the LAC to point out services available or provide a detailed list of providers with a description of their services.

Self-Help Workstations

Three self-service kiosks were available to residents.

Comment: Most residents were unaware of the availability of the kiosks. I only saw them being used when a staff member guided a resident to the kiosk. Provide better information on the availability of the kiosk and information that can be obtained when using it.

Service Providers (Attachment B)

General Information-Table Count: 309 households

Staffed with two mental health professionals, this station was offered as the first stop after residents were processed through Intake. This station was also responsible for answering the LAC phone and transferring calls as appropriate.

A separate meeting room was available if there was an immediate need for mental health services. Residents were provided with a list of available mental health services for future reference and provided with the opportunity to receive additional information including;

- Alert Solano
- Change of Address for Voter Registration
- Ticket provided by DMV to allow those needing services to be handled as if they had scheduled an appointment. DMV also stayed open on 8/30/20 and 9/5/20 (Sun/Sat).
- General information about donations and services available

Comment: Mental Health Professional in the break out room was only used once but it allowed that resident conduct the business at hand. As the week progressed, the number of community resources increased. I recommend having a separate table for general information and community resources.

Assessor/Recorder- Property Taxes/ Important Documents- Table Count: 211 households

Comment: Add the ability to print replacement documents on site and provide information on how to request documents from other County and States.

State Employment Development Department- Table Count: 49 households

Comment: Limited job loss because of the fire.

Building and Planning- Permitting- Table Count: 169 households

Comment: The first day of the LAC, this table was set up next to Environmental Health which created a bottleneck. Environmental Health was moved to the other side of the room on the second day to relieve congestion.

Health & Social Services-Benefit Assistance- Table Count: 42

Comment: Demographics of those impacted by the fire were generally not eligible for these benefits.

Sheriff's Office- Animal Care- Table Count: 58 households

Comment: In addition to the services provided at the table, animal kennels and water bowls were brought on site for residents to use while seeking services. A tent provided shade. Many residents brought their dogs to the LAC for either comfort or because they weren't allowed to leave them unattended at the hotel. Residents could bring their dogs in to the LAC (many of which did) but a few utilized the kennels.

Veteran's Affairs- Table Count: 42 households

Comment: California Department of Veterans Affairs was onsite 3 days and saw 17 households

California Department of Insurance/ Contractors State Licensing Board- Table Count: 88 households

American Red Cross - Table Count: 117 households

Comment: This table provided bottled water and snacks. Although they took down contact information for those needing services, I am not aware of any services provided onsite.

American Red Cross donated shovels/rakes, sifting box and storage containers with N95 masks, garbage bags, work gloves, safety goggles and other items that were distributed after receiving guidance from Environmental Health on safely sifting through ash. These were in high demand.

Small Business Development Center- Table Count: 65 households

Public Works- Grading- Table Count: 171 households

Environmental Health- Debris, Septic, Wells- Table Count: 218 households

Comment: Needed two staff at all times to avoid long wait times. Visits at this table were lengthy.

United Policy Holders- Table Count: 57 households

Comment: Nonprofit organization staffed by volunteers (fire survivors) providing information from personal experience about the insurance process. Valuable information.

AT&T- Utilities- Table Count: 9 households

Comment: Attended the first day only. Said they would try to come back but never did. Recommend getting a commitment if possible for the duration.

Agriculture/ USDA- Table Count: 52 households

FEMA

FEMA provided on-site registration services in the building as well as outdoors next to their mobile unit.

Comment: Coordinating services with FEMA was difficult the first two days as the local representative was receiving staging direction contrary to previous agreements. Many residents had registered for FEMA online prior to coming to the LAC. Written information on the FEMA process, including timelines and deadlines as well as available funding would have been useful.

Food Bank- Onsite several days distributing food

Comment: Many residents took advantage of this offering. A Food Bank presence everyday would have been preferable.

General Comments:

- *Tables were well organized and spread out to allow for social distancing and effective traffic flow. Residents had to exit the building and walk around the back to access FEMA. While that provided one-way traffic flow, limited mobility was an issue for some residents. Some days were also hot and smoky making the trek around the building uncomfortable.*
- *A staff member was originally stationed at the FEMA area to conduct the exit survey. Many residents had already registered for FEMA so skipped this step. As a result, the exit survey was moved to be conducted prior to exiting the main building.*
- *There were a few inquiries for donated goods and gift cards. The LAC was contacted by a couple community members looking for a distribution mechanism for donations they'd received. LAC staff developed and distributed a flyer informing survivors of a give-away event and called people that had already visited the LAC to provide them with the information.*

Solano has an active Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD) that did not participate in the LAC. I did speak with Rhonda Smith from the Center for Volunteer & Nonprofit Leadership on 8/31/20. She expressed interest in having someone from St. Vincent dePauls staff a table to provide gift cards. I told her that I would make space in the LAC, but a representative did not appear until the afternoon of 9/11. At that point the number of visitors had dwindled so I told him it wasn't necessary. He left brochures instead.

Need someone onsite to address the need for goods and gift cards.

- *Several media outlets reported on the LAC primarily on the first day of operations. Don Ryan and Robyn Rains did an excellent job fielding questions.*
- *Some basic guidelines to help the LAC workforce understand the impacts of trauma would be helpful. I observed heightened emotions from residents toward the end of the two-week period.*
- *Develop an infographic or roadmap to recovery/rebuilding to help survivors understand the steps they need to take.*
- *Have an unassigned table available to be used for overflow if one of the workstations get backed up.*
- *Consider evening hours to allow for working residents to access services.*
- *Advertise hours to end one hour before staff are released.*

Local Assistance Center- Phase 2

The LAC operated for an additional 5 days from Tuesday, September 8, 2020 through Tuesday, September 15, 2020 (excluding the weekend) at the Solano County Administration Center, 675 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA 94533. In addition to a General Information table with materials from most of the agencies that participated in the Vacaville LAC, tables were staffed by Environmental Health, Public Works and the Assessor/Recorder. Assistance with registering for FEMA was also available. Thirty-three

(33) residents visited the Fairfield LAC, most of which had visited the Vacaville LAC and needed additional information.