

Village of Cloudcroft Holds America's PrepareAthon! Event

The Village of Cloudcroft, N.M., held its annual evacuation exercise March 3, 2015, with more than 15 federal, state, and local agencies taking part in the day-long event to help the community prepare for emergencies. The event was part of America's PrepareAthon! – a national grassroots campaign for action coordinated by FEMA in partnership with communities across the country.

“This is an incredible opportunity for our village,” said Erich Wuerching, Cloudcroft Fire Chief. “Being prepared for disasters is a shared responsibility. It takes the entire community working together to be prepared and respond to emergencies. It makes a real difference in our ability to take action and, ultimately, recover from the disaster.”

The Village of Cloudcroft is a remote community located in the Sacramento Mountains at an elevation of nearly 9,000 feet and surrounded by the Lincoln National Forest. The village and surrounding areas have approximately 900 full time residents.

The event focused on the safe evacuation of students at Cloudcroft Municipal Schools and the Cloudcroft Methodist Preschool. This included all students pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade. With more than 350 children across four schools, the goal is to have students on buses and headed out of town within 15 minutes.

“We successfully accomplished the evacuation of all three of our schools in 17 minutes. This includes getting students from the classrooms to the buses,” said Travis Dempsey, Cloudcroft Municipal Schools Superintendent.

Wuerching said another emphasis was accounting for, and possible evacuation of, all home-bound residents. The Cloudcroft Senior Center maintains a list of all residents who need transportation assistance in the event of an emergency, including residents who are unable to receive communication. There are approximately 100 residents on the list.

In addition, several businesses conducted their own drills, including the evacuation of the largest hotel in the community, and a pet sheltering exercise. During the exercise, the Reverse911 system and emergency evacuation sirens were also tested to ensure they operated properly.

Visit www.ready.gov/prepare for more information about America's PrepareAthon!