The Los Angeles Marathon was my first deployment and I can honestly say I was very excited to have an assignment where I could finally put into action the skills I learned in training and to work with a team of firefighters, police officers, my fellow CERT members and a variety of other City personnel, all of whom are dedicated to their community. There was ample support staff at the marathon, from volunteers called “hot walkers”, who assess each runner as they cross the finish line, as well as others who distributed food and water, to first responders. From my perspective, close to the finish line, the marathon was in perfect form and the only thing needed was to wait for the runners to arrive. That’s when the real excitement began.

Our role as CERT members was to be alert for any runners who might be in need of a little more attention and do what was required based on our sizing up of the situation. We were trained after all! To be honest there were only a few serious situations where paramedics actually had to do advanced treatment. Most of the time it was cramping, exhaustion and dehydration. What do you expect after a run like that? Seeing the elite runners come, followed by the athletes, then followed by friends and family. Their giant smiles and beaming radiance was all I needed to see to know the importance of this marathon to so many people, for so many different reasons. There was struggle, joy, fun, fear, gratitude and satisfaction on the faces of many. An accomplishment attained; a giant mountain top reached. Congrats to you one and all!

The City’s Emergency Operations Center utilized SM Alerts to provide periodic updates via text and email. These notifications kept us abreast of where the runners were and when, which kept us alert and aware. We knew that Santa Monica weather could be tricky. While we hoped for sunshine, it was not to be. The fog remained and the chill in the air was cutting, especially to those who had run 26.2 miles to get to our beautiful City.

For me, it was an experience that made me feel proud, made me feel like I was doing something worthwhile and serving the City by the sea that I love so much. Thank you Santa Monica for training me to be better. I can’t wait for my next assignment. By then I will have replaced my beautiful CERT hat that was lost in the revelry.

Rochelle is a Gerontologist Consultant and serves as Vice-Chair of the Commission for the Senior Community in Santa Monica. Rochelle is also the producer/host of “Let’s Talk” on Santa Monica CityTV.
March proved to be a very busy month for the Santa Monica Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Team.

The month began with an EOC Team exercise which challenged City Staff to respond to a simulated terrorist attack at the Santa Monica Pier. This was one of two, annual emergency exercises mandated by City Manager Rod Gould. The EOC team was given three hours to practice EOC operations which included: the immediate support of simulated emergency response personnel, emergency public information and warnings, the activation of an emergency shelter, and other disaster response related activities. This was the first opportunity for the EOC Team to exercise their planning and response skills in the newly remodeled Emergency Operations Center. It was also the Team’s first opportunity to utilize the new, computer based, disaster management software program, WebEOC.

WebEOC significantly aids the EOC Team in gathering, displaying, analyzing, and sharing information during the response to an emergency, either real, or in training.

The Santa Monica EOC Team was also busy on March 17th, in support of the 2013 Los Angeles Marathon. The Marathon’s course, now dubbed, “Stadium to the Sea”, began at Dodger Stadium and ended on Ocean Avenue, close to the Santa Monica Pier. With more than 20,000 runners expected to cross the finish line, and an additional 50,000 people waiting to greet them, the city of Santa Monica and its personnel were very busy. After eight months of extensive planning, the City of Santa Monica was ready for Marathon day. The Office of Emergency Management and the EOC Team played a key role in support of the responders and runners.

This annual event provides the City of Santa Monica an opportunity to practice our emergency response systems in a real and very dynamic manner. By practicing during planned events such as the Marathon, we are better prepared for when the unplanned incidents occur.

If your business or organization would like assistance in emergency planning or exercises, please contact OEM at (310) 458-2263 or oem@smgov.net.
Lights, Camera, Preparedness! by Tatiana Morrison

Picture a woman working at her desk. The window behind her suggests that she’s working late in a high rise office building. She takes a moment to check her voicemail. A message from her daughter informs her that she’s home, heated up dinner and saved a plate. As the woman hangs up her focus turns to the vase on her desk. Water in the vase begins to move slightly, back and forth. The scene quickly changes to home, where family pictures are falling of the wall and water is spilling out of the swimming pool.

In 2012, the award winning “Woman in Film” group collaborated with the City of Santa Monica to create a Public Safety Announcement about earthquake preparedness. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) staff met with director Alison Marek, producer Marquette Jones and writer Suzanne Lezotte to discuss the concept for the film and what message OEM wanted to convey. It was an eye opening experience for the women that visited the City’s Emergency Operations Center and learned about Santa Monica’s threats and actions individuals or businesses can take now to mitigate the effects of a disaster.

Filming of the PSA took place over a 24 hour period at a scouted office building in Santa Monica. Wrapping in the early morning hours, the crew immediately went to work on post-production and the result was “An Ordinary Day”, OEM’s 30 second earthquake preparedness PSA.

OEM would like to thank Alison Marek, Suzanne Lezotte, Marquette Jones, Natalie Metzger and Robin Gee; for their creation and production of this important emergency preparedness message. Visit OEM’s website to view “An Ordinary Day” www.smgov.net/oem

AmeriCorner: Catching Up by Alexa Harper

It’s been 5 months since I joined AmeriCorps California Safe Corps and the Office of Emergency Management. I have really enjoyed my time with OEM and learned a lot of valuable skills I will take with me. Just as my term was beginning, I was deployed to New Jersey to help with the relief efforts for Hurricane Sandy. This experience allowed me to see first-hand the immediate needs of a community following a disaster. Over the last several months I have participated in training exercises, become CERT certified, responded to local disasters, given Preparedness Presentations, and taught CPR courses. I have discovered that I have a true passion for Disaster Response work and am excited to continue to help our community prepare for and respond to disasters. One of the main goals of our AmeriCorps program is to educate people on Disaster Preparedness and Response. If you are interested in Preparedness Presentations for adults or children or CPR/FA courses, please let me know at alexa.harper@redcross.org.

What’s Going On? We want to hear from you about emergency preparedness efforts happening in your home, neighborhood and workplace. Email us with your exciting news at oem@smgov.net