



July 21, 2008

Executive Summary Nogales Wash Flood

On Sunday July 13th 2008 Tubac Fire District was requested to respond to the Nogales Wash area in Nogales Arizona. The requesting agency was Santa Cruz County Emergency Services for The City of Nogales. On July 12th a severe thunderstorm caused major flooding in Nogales Sonora which subsequently caused severe flooding in Nogales Arizona. The Nogales Wash runs through the heart of the City of Nogales with both the Nogales Police Department and Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office being located within 100 yards of this wash. The wash is made up of concrete panels and underneath the wash is the IOI sewer line that carries 12 million gallons of raw sewage a day to the Rio Rico International Sewage treatment plant for processing. During the flooding multiple concrete sections in the wash were compromised with 8 concrete panels completely breaking free which had the potential to cause a dam in the wash which would flood both dispatch centers in the county. With the panels gone this exposed the IOI sewer line which if compromised would have caused a major environmental disaster.

On the first day of the deployment the communications van was set up with STACS to monitor weather radar and satellite. Any rain fall within a 50 square mile area would cause the wash to run. With crews and equipment in the wash working on clean-up and repair this was a critical mission for personnel safety. Due to more rain that evening and further damage to the wash the Santa Cruz Command Trailer was requested and deployed on the 14th. The mission for the Tubac Communications vehicle and STACS escalated to supporting the 8 laptop computer systems in the command trailer and also provide telephone conference bridge capabilities while maintaining the core duty of weather monitoring and alerting. Radio communications was adequate so no radio interoperability was needed for this incident.

During this incident constant emails and data file transfers were completed through STACS to multiple agencies. On the 16th the State of Arizona declared an emergency which added personnel and demands for data and telephone capabilities provided by STACS. Conference calls between the State and the City were constant with updates through STACS to the Governor's office and later to the State Department in Washington DC. On 4 occasions the internet and ability to monitor the current weather situation through STACS provide ample warning to get crews out of the wash before the flood water arrived. During on flood event bodies were spotted in the wash which put the incident into recovery mode. Video of the incident was also sent through STACS to local media stations for broadcast on the evening news. On the last evening of the deployment STACS was reassigned to the Port of Entry area on the International Border. This was a joint operation between Mexico and the United States to remove an obstruction underneath the Port of Entry. STACS was used to provide conference calling to Border Patrol in Washington DC and Nogales Sonora.

Once again the STACS unit worked flawlessly. Not one dropped phone call or interruption in internet service was experienced during the 6 days the system was deployed. On the 16th the Tubac communications vehicle was released from the incident however STACS remained deployed until the end of the incident on July 20th. Again the only negative in the after action report was that the agencies involved did not know the capabilities of the system. The STACS unit went into operation on June 20th 2008 and was immediately deployed to the White Tanks/Nuevo Fire and then soon after deployed to the Nogales wash incident. With the limited amount of time between incidents there was just not enough time to get out and educate the other agencies in Santa Cruz County about the capabilities of the Tubac communications vehicle and STACS. This however is now a top priority for the Tubac Fire District.

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