

Ground Truth: Lethal Waters

Threat Details:

The tranquil Tuesday morning in the unassuming towns located in Onondaga County in New York started off as any other crisp March morning. At 6:11am however the whole region was shaken by a 4.8 magnitude earthquake without warning. This resulted in moderate damage to some of the structures in the city of Syracuse and the surrounding towns such as Fayetteville, Minoa, and Lyncourt, putting the local law enforcement on high alert. However, other than giving the locals a fright, the initial damage caused by the earthquake was not catastrophic. Soon the full extent of the threat from the seismic activity was realised with devastating effects.

Unknown to the unsuspecting county, a limnic eruption occurred as the dissolved carbon dioxide (CO₂) suddenly erupted from the deep waters of the two lakes. CCTV from the Green Lake National park captures the moment the lakes swell, creating small tsunamis posing an immediate risk to those in the vicinity. Unbeknownst to the terrified public the tsunamis are the least of their worries. Silently a deadly gas cloud formed above the surface of both lakes. As the density of the lethal cloud of CO₂ became heavier than that of the air it slowly began to descend on the surrounding area suffocating wildlife, livestock, and humans for miles around.

Furthermore the seismic activity under Round Lake and Green Lake caused a deadly underground shift, resulting in the already meromictic bodies of water suddenly exploding into limnically active lakes, with deadly consequences. To make matters even more urgent the cloud of CO₂ (which is larger than any observed from the scarce preceding eruptions due to the two lakes erupting) is swiftly being carried by a strong wind of 13 mph on the Beaufort wind scale, heading west, straight to downtown Syracuse.

Specifics of the threat:

The inhabited areas closest to Green Lake and Round Lake are the towns of Fayetteville (Population of 4,225) , Lyncourt (population 4,250) and Minoa (population 3,653). In addition the city of Syracuse which has a population of 148,000, is in the direct line of the deadly lakes with a mere eleven miles between the thriving city and the fast approaching cloud of CO₂.

Medical experts need to be dispatched as soon as possible to deal with the victims of the carbon dioxide poisoning to ensure that the survivors are treated promptly and effectively. Oxygen tanks and Hyperbaric Oxygen tanks will need to be brought immediately to combat the mass poisoning and save as many people as possible. Furthermore medical professionals will need to be dispatched from surrounding areas to help all the injured survivors.

Additionally the US army may need to assist the Natural Disaster Response and Recovery teams in quickly recovering the bodies of the victims (humans, livestock and wildlife) to prevent any contamination of bodies of water to stop the spread of any water borne diseases such as Gastroenteritis into the water system. If rescue efforts do not adhere to proper precautions and regulations for their safety their risk of contracting illnesses from the deceased is extremely high, so the team needs to follow protocol to the T, as to not contract diseases such as hepatitis B and hepatitis C, HIV, and any other enteric intestinal pathogens.

A plan needs to be made for an immediate degassing of the two lakes. The lakes need to be heavily monitored and studied as the lakes are brought back into CO2 balance through a degassing program similar to the Lake Nyos plan in Cameroon. The Local, State and Federal government need to act in unison to quickly and effectively set up a pipe system to pump out the water and to recharge the natural CO2 balance in the two lakes. Furthermore the Federal Emergency Management Agency needs to do work in tandem with the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) to neutralise the threat. Additionally the Recovery Support Functions need to be put in place to effectively restore the communities affected as fast as possible.

The disaster will cause widespread panic for residents who live nearby any lakes in the United States, especially those in the North East. Prompting many people to try and move out of any and all lakeside towns, resulting in a crashing housing market in specific areas creating economic issues in the surrounding towns. Furthermore because of the obscurity of this type of disaster it has also led to many online debates and activists discussing what the tragedy might be. Some suggest that it is a biological gas attack from a hostile country, while others theorising that the population of Onondaga County were the tragic victims of a biological experiment. This hysteria is further fueled by leaked footage of the FBI observing the site causing the speculation to explode into nationwide panic. Furthermore this panic has resulted in a growing distrust in the governing officials, leading to protests and riots all over the country. Due to the internet firestorm about the disaster officials from Canada are trying to meet with the US government to ascertain potential effects the mysterious disaster could have on the nearby Canadian territory. Further complicating the tense situation with international interference and interest.

The rarity of such a disaster has also left the local government woefully unprepared to secure the situation, resulting in riots and a distrust in local government. Additionally because of the destroyed local ecosystem there has been a food shortage that has the potential to lead to a rise in crime such as looting as local prices skyrocket due to lack of supplies.

