



The GP Responder

September 2020

<https://gp-cert.org>

Message from Incident Commander, Gordon Holtby

I am very pleased to announce that the Gran Paradiso–Community Emergency Response Team (“GP-CERT”) newsletter is now ‘off and running.’ Special congratulations to the winner of the newsletter naming contest, Jeff Myles, who entered the name, “The GP Responder.”



By way of introduction, my name is Gordon Holtby. My wife, Jo, and I have lived in Gran Paradiso since July of 2017. I became involved in starting up GP-CERT in January of 2019 with a number of other Gran Paradiso residents. My GP-CERT role is that of “Incident Commander” being responsible for providing overall leadership in our team’s response to any incidents, such as hurricanes, that may occur.

In my message this month, I want to say thank you to not only our GP-CERT volunteers, but to all the volunteers in our amazing community. For some people, volunteering is a way of life and their generosity and dedication towards helping others is inspiring. My wife and I feel fortunate to live in a fabulous community with such incredible people. We truly believe it is important to give something back to our community through our own volunteering efforts. To the GP-CERT volunteers - I know I don’t say it often enough – THANK YOU! Your generous contributions of time and energy towards helping out our community in the aftermath of any potential disaster are very much appreciated. Stay safe!

Sincerely,
Gordon Holtby
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*CERT Team Exercises
February, 2020*



Volunteers Needed!

GP-CERT is a volunteer organization that deploys in the aftermath of disasters in the community. There is a continued need for volunteers to work in areas such as damage assessment, search and rescue, team organization, communications, and basic first aid. Volunteers will be assigned to tasks based upon their desires, skills, and experience. Background/training in these areas is encouraged, but not required. The GP-CERT training and preparation will allow community members to respond and assist each other in those hours between the incident and the return of our property management staff.



For more information or to volunteer, please go to the GP-CERT website at <https://gp-cert.org> or contact Gordon Holtby at gordon.holtby@gmail.com

FYI—Pool Maintenance Prior to a Hurricane by Trent DePersia

Preparing your pool or spa/hot tub prior to a Tropical Storm or Hurricane is necessary to ensure they provide continued enjoyment after the storm has passed. According to the Florida Swimming Pool Association (www.floridapoolpro.com), there are some basic things you should do to your pool/spa before and after the storm.

Before storm: Do not drain your pool! Maintaining proper water levels will ensure the weight of the water keeps the sides and bottoms in place during a storm, especially where water tables may rise during heavy rains.



Turn off power at the circuit breakers to the pool equipment. You may also want to cover pumps and other electrical equipment to reduce exposure to wet weather.

Shock your pool (super chlorinate it). If you lose power for an extended period of time, this will help to maintain the pool chemistry. Consult your pool maintenance professional for details.

Clear unsecured objects from poolside – chairs, tables, pool equipment, etc. – that may become flying projectiles in high winds. If you can't store items inside, then gently and carefully place them in the pool to keep them from being affected by the wind. Remember, place items in the pool rather than toss them – you don't want to damage the side and

bottom of the pool. Also, pool chemicals may damage some items, so be careful.

After storm: Before turning the pool pumps back on, clear debris from the pool with a net, uncover equipment covered prior to the storm, and check electrical connections/wiring. Consult a professional if anything appears to be damaged. You may want to shock the pool again to balance the chemicals in the pool. Consult your pool professional.

More details regarding pool maintenance and safety prior to and after storms can be found at www.floridapoolpro.com or <https://www.floridapoolpro.com/hurricane-pool-safety/>.



Did you know?

- The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1st through November 30th.
- The National Weather Service defines a hurricane as a “tropical cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or higher.”
- A Category 3 or higher is considered a major hurricane.
- As of August 6, NOAA predicts 19 to 25 named storms for the 2020 season, including 7 to 11 hurricanes.

Attribution: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/11/us/2020-atlantic-hurricane-season-fast-facts/index.html>

Builder-Supplied Metal Storm Shutters by Robert Spong



Many first-time Florida home buyers have not previously been exposed to the need for storm shutters to protect their homes during tropical storms or hurricanes. Many new home purchasers receive the original builder-supplied metal shutters and associated hardware in the garage along with a video tutorial explaining the shutters' installation. During the frenzy of final settlement on the home and moving to Florida, the salesperson often says that you will never need to worry about these shutters, so they stay in the garage and are soon forgotten. Once settled into their new home, buyers realize there is a new season – the Florida hurricane season – that runs from June through November each year, and they may actually need those storm shutters.

We are fortunate to live in a time and place where the availability and reliability of scientific weather predictions affords all of us a great deal of advance warning of adverse weather. Understanding the difference between a Hurricane Watch and a Hurricane Warning is key to understanding how and when to implement your storm preparation plans. “If Watch is used then you should prepare for a potential significant weather event, but if a Warning is used, then you should take immediate action as there is an imminent weather hazard in your area.” (Ref: <https://www.weather.gov/news/201106-hazard-simplification>)

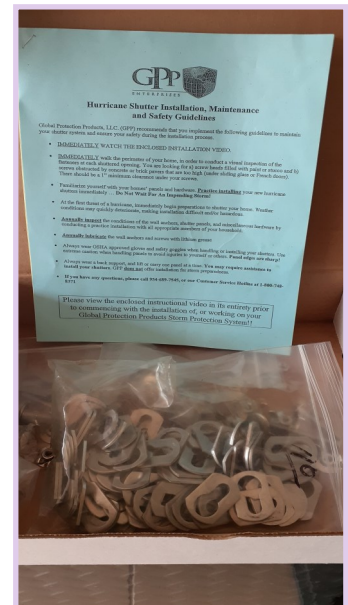
The following are some of the lessons this homeowner learned during and after Hurricane Irma in 2017.

- When a storm is named and computer models have determined that your location could possibly be in the storm path, locate your storm shutters and the attachment hardware. Review the video tutorial (there should be a diagram of your home included with each opening identified).
- Five days prior to the projected arrival of the storm (estimated time of Hurricane Watch) begin to distribute the metal panels around your home, beginning with the larger, heavier panels for your rear sliding lanai doors. Establish your storm preparation plan.
- Three days prior to the storm (estimated time of Hurricane Warning) begin to install the larger panels on sliders and doors. Initiate your plan. (Leave the front exit open to be installed last and, if possible, leave one rear exit open).
- Continue tracking the storm using your choice of weather information such as National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- Two days prior to the storm, if the weather forecasts still show your community in the path, install the shutters on the smaller windows on your home.

Note: It is suggested that you begin putting up your metal panels before wind speeds start to increase and allow yourself two days to complete the job. The shutters are heavy and bulky! It is not advisable to put up shutters when there are high winds, rain, or lightning.

Installing the builder-supplied metal storm shutters for the first time prior to hurricane season (when it is cooler) is a worthwhile exercise to ensure that all shutters fit properly, and that you are not missing any required components. At that time, it helps to use a good penetrating oil to help lubricate the bolts for the next time you will need to install the shutters. It also helps to have two people to install the shutters (one to hold them in place and one to bolt them to the opening). Protective gloves and plenty of patience are recommended. Having appropriate tools to install the shutters; such as ladders, Phillips screwdrivers, and a drill (battery powered recommended) will facilitate the installation, especially if the builder-supplied kit includes an adapter to secure the wing nuts.

The above notes are offered to suggest a systematic approach to storm preparation and the installation of the builder supplied metal storm shutters. Other preparations are also necessary including, but not necessarily limited to, moving all loose objects such as grills, planters, decorative art, pool cleaning equipment from the front and rear of your home and placing these items in the garage. Anything that can become a projectile in high winds should be moved inside.



CERT Communications System by Tom Porada

Let me start by asking – have you seen the antenna? It's the tall thingy sticking out of the trash area in back of the main parking lot with the solar panel. It looks very similar to the antennas used by North Port Utilities throughout the community at their pump stations. You may have thought it was one of theirs.

It's much more than an antenna. The project was to install a *communications system* including an antenna, a repeater and a 24/7 power supply to enable emergency communications throughout Gran Paradiso. Because the system is meant for use following a disaster event where power might be lost, 100% solar/battery was chosen. The solar panel supplies power to a lithium battery via a charge controller. The battery supplies the power to the repeater. All of this equipment is mounted inside a weather tight enclosure mounted to the inside block wall of the trash area. The antenna and solar panel masts are mounted in the same location.

[A repeater is a device that receives a weak signal on one frequency then rebroadcasts it at a higher power level on another frequency 'instantaneously'.]

How did this come about? When did it start? Sometime on or before the spring of 2019 it became apparent that the CERT effort needed a means for the volunteers to talk with Incident Command (IC) from anywhere in GP. Since CERT was still young it had no solid source of funding any significant effort; ergo, the means of communicating had to be relatively inexpensive. That thinking led to the April 2019 GP communications test. Sixteen volunteers were dispersed around GP to assigned zone locations. The volunteers used their own GMRS/FRS walkie talkies and were given instructions on evaluating signals from each of the other volunteers. This test resulted in the understanding that talkies alone were not the solution for reliable communications.

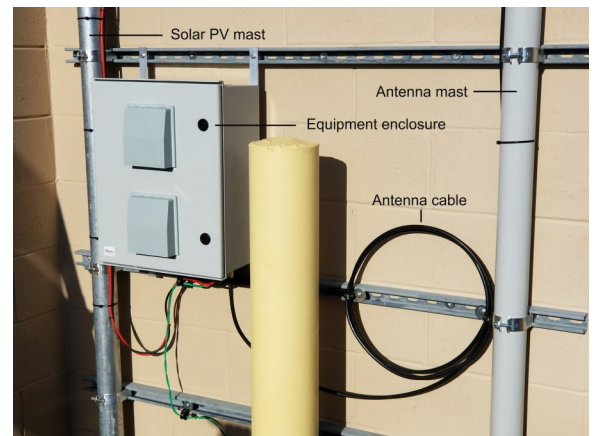
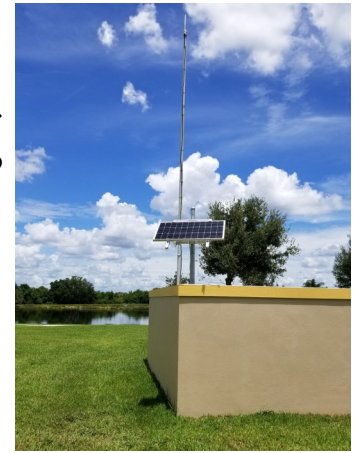
After doing research and knowing the value of using ham radio repeaters over medium range distances, I found appropriate equipment (repeater and 24 talkies) and proposed it to Gordon Holtby, GP's CERT leader. The cost was a little over \$500. Gordon had a discussion with the pool water aerobics group who then donated monies for the project. This equipment arrived in July 2019. Tests were run shortly thereafter using my personal antenna and mast connected to my solar golf cart. The repeater and talkies did the job.

About this same time I had been in conversation with Paul Nienabor of Island Walk who was going through a similar communications issue. Both of us being hams knew instinctively that interference was imminent unless we coordinated the use of frequencies. We got to it and solved the issue. We used the new equipment and my personal items for test exercises for the next 6 months or so, storing it in my garage. Obviously, keeping items in my garage was not a good solution as only I had access to them. We needed to fix that.

In the May 2020 time frame, I sketched out a design for the permanent mounting of the system including additional items now installed. This was presented to Grant Gorski (ICON/POA) for approval to mount the system in a permanent location. Grant discussed this with the POA and in June 2020 a survey for acceptability was sent to GP owners. 94% of homeowners approved the antenna installation.

About the same time Gordon and the CERT team were preparing to apply for a Sarasota County Neighborhood grant. Monies to upgrade the system were included and Gordon got a significant grant allocated to Gran Paradiso CERT. In July 2020 orders for the new design were placed and items began trickling in a few weeks later. By early September 2020 the new system was installed and tested with help from others, including Steve Phillips.

Overall the project took about a year and a half and I hope we never have to use it in earnest!!!





The Gran Paradiso – Community Emergency Response Team (GP-CERT) has been formed to assist neighbors in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. The team is comprised of your neighbors who have undertaken the appropriate training to assist where needed.

Please submit articles and/or corrections to the newsletter publisher, Jeff Myles, at jmyles19@gmail.com. Jeff thanks the following contributors to this newsletter, Trent DePersia, Robert Spong, and Tom Porada.



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The GP Responder is a publication of the Gran Paradiso—Community Emergency Response Team. Our plan is to publish it every second month throughout the year. The GP Responder is forwarded to all residents by ICON, our management company, and it is also available for viewing in the GP-CERT website at <https://gp-cert.org>

