**Tuesday, November 8th , 2021 GP-CERT Meeting Minutes:**

**Holtby welcomed everyone, and offered a special welcome to anyone attending their first GP-CERT meeting. He requested that everyone sign in and noted that tonight’s meeting should last approximately one hour.**

**Holtby mentioned that when we last met from a weather perspective, we were still looking good – Hurricane Danielle and Tropical Storm Earl – but things can change quickly, as we all saw first hand from Hurricane Ian. He also apologized that he did not distribute an agenda for tonight’s meeting.**

**Holtby felt that it was important to first talk about Hurricane Ian – what we learned from it, and how out team might improve based on those observations – and then to talk a little bit about Tropical Storm Nicole and a few other matters.**

**Holtby noted there was an article in the November Lifestyle Bulletin on page 9 titled “Ian-A Most Unwelcomed Visitor and the Unsung Heroes of Gran Paradiso Who Greeted Him”. A little background information on the article – your GP-CERT Command Team had a meeting with three members of our POA Board on Wednesday, October 12th at Holtby’s home. The purpose of this meeting was to have a team debriefing and to collectively go over our Ian experience. The Board also thanked GP-CERT for their assistance post-Ian. Holtby was amenable to having the GP BOD members at the meeting so we could collectively work more effectively in any future events.**

**Holtby noted that Sarasota County’s Emergency Management Chief, Ed McCrane, had asked all County CERT teams that activated after Hurricane Ian to submit an After Action Report (known as an “AAR’) for consolidation into the County’s Hurricane Ian AAR. Ed McCrane also relayed his appreciation for what all CERT members do voluntarily when the need arises. He noted how much CERT matters to the County and to their individual communities and neighborhoods. A five page report was produced based on feedback from 13 different CERTs (ranging in community size from 95 to 2300 homes), with a total of 90 consolidated “Lessons Learned”. Holtby then shared some of those “Lessons Learned”:**

**1. It is almost certain that power and all communication services will be inoperable after a major hurricane – \_even if we are not significantly impacted.**

**2. It is imperative to keep the storm drains open during the hurricane to keep water flowing out of the neighborhood. However, we discovered that at some point, when area spill ways become backed up, the storm drains become totally ineffective.**

**3. There may be some confusion about deployment. The door knock tree was not used since there was no deployment. Some team members were anxious about deploying since they did not hear anything via text or door knock tree.**

**4. There was also some confusion regarding what Storm Zone homes are located in. As it turns out, the latest information available shows that part of the neighborhood is Zone B and part of the neighborhood is Zone C.**

**5. As Ian demonstrated, CERT needs 2-way radio communication with a signal that reaches across the community and hand sets for each area captain, the CERT communications person, and the CERT Lead at a minimum. Ideally, each Zone Lead would also have a hand set.**

**6. Close communication and cooperation between the HOA boards and CERT should work cooperatively to supply needed water, food and electricity to residents.**

**7. We need to take every opportunity to introduce and recruit CERT volunteers. Community gatherings provides an excellent opportunity to establish a community presence.**

**8. Resident Preparation - Residents need to plan better before and after for storms and become more self-sufficient. An inordinate number of residents did not anticipate shuttering and were frantically asking for assistance from neighbors to install and take down shutters.**

**9. If residents have physical limitations, call 311 for County assistance – and have residents sign up for the Medical Needs Program well in advance of storm events .**

**10. CERT should consider a Preparedness meeting five days prior to expected landfall advising people who want to leave that they should leave within 24 hours of that meeting. Some residents that left our community on Monday and Tuesday were lucky to make it out of the area.**

**11. Overall, the community escaped with only minor damage. Residents must not be complacent thinking all will be well in the future.**

**12. We need a text and phone tree**

**13. We need a mechanism for mass communication when staff has vacated.**

**14. We need landscape guidance on how to protect trees, plants, and shrubs.**

**15. We need info on residents’ decisions to stay or leave.**

**16. Volunteers need to have rubber boots or waders for flood and storm surge situations given proximity to the Myakka River. Perhaps CERT can purchase these items.**

**17. Need a better way to communicate with the Board of Directors, as we want to coordinate efforts and not work at cross purposes post storm, so giving them radios or walkie talkies during hurricane season would make sense.**

**18. CERT banners or signage is needed for vehicles/golf carts as well as CERT hardhats to identify CERT volunteers.**

**19. Have residents shut off water prior to storm (outside shutoff), as when it came back on, the surge in pressure caused some homes to flood through pipes that broke due to the water surge.**

**20. Have at least one resident on each street have a walkie-talkie in the event of repeater/GMRS radio failure.**

**21. Look into roof vent baffles, as roughly 40% of the homes in community had water come through the roof vents during this storm, in many cases causing extensive ceiling damage and mold. Homes that had baffles installed in their roof vents had little to no water incursion.**

**22. We need to prepare better for the unpredictable nature of hurricanes and other events, as we may have let our guard down a little when all predictions were landfall north of Tampa.**

**23. Mobility was a serious issue due to street flooding. A boat would not be of much help because there were many high points in the streets that were dry and flooding was mainly near storm drains.**

**24. Our centralized command center was unreachable due to flooding. We will consider a mobile command center.**

**25. We are going to look into obtaining a drone for each zone and do searches by drone.**

**26. Its also worth restating the CERT mission as characterized by FEMA: In particular CERT focuses on reducing risks of injury and death and treating injuries if they arise. By contrast, CERT does not (officially) mount storm shutters, maintain generators, warehouse fuel, sandbag lanais, nor do we make any policy decisions as the latter are the purview of the board of directors.**

**27. CERT training, although informative, provided no direction for the scenario we were facing. We were swamped with water and too few members available to cover the miles of territory.**

**28. Work with the HOA to establish an Emergency Street Captain for each street in the Community; ESCs can relay information to Zone Leaders so that Zone Leaders can more effectively manage situational awareness within their zone.**

**29. Plan/develop some sort of flag system that will let emergency responders know that help is needed by a resident**

**30. Binoculars and/or drone for use at Command Center**

**31. Laminated small maps of community including storm drains for deployment teams. Create and laminate list of emergency numbers and contractor numbers and onsite experts for Command Center.**

**A few other observations:**

1. **We need to revise some of the items in the backpacks and zone boxes such as Yellow caution tape, laminated zone maps, rubber boots, and collapsible red traffic cones.**
2. **We need CERT banner, flag and/or signs that affixes to cars and/or golf carts to identify our team volunteers.**
3. **We need to get Star Link or other satellite communication information and options for similar events.**
4. **We need to revise our operational plan, with input from each respective area.**
5. **We should stay out of traffic control and the shutter install business. Perhaps our gate access is redefined as a "watch commander" at each gate.**
6. **Each Zone Leader needs to have a list of available volunteers. Who will stay and who will evacuate. Even if you leave at the last minute.**
7. **We need a backup plan for transfer of leadership. If my roof blows off or I lose my house, that will be my first priority and someone else will need to pick up the slack for GP-CERT.  Zone Leaders should also have a designated backup.**
8. **The zone leaders need to contact the zone volunteers to find out who is going to be around, and if so, are they be able to assist if needed.**
9. **Alternative locations for zone volunteers to meet up after an incident need to be designated and have zone members notified.**
10. **Cooler wicking type GP-CERT t-shirts may make sense, as the existing shirts are hot to wear.**
11. **Some type of informational table set up at the Clubhouse/Parking Lot for residents to ask questions prior to a storm or after a storm when feasible. Have the table manned with GP-CERT volunteers to field questions or give out information. Before a storm, folks panic and don't know what to do. After a storm, the panic increases and becomes frustration and anger because they don't know whom to turn to because of lack of communication available.**
12. **A GP-CERT Hurricane Expo is in Order, but not as a replacement for Family Safety Day, with presentations specific to hurricane preparation.**

**There was then a general discussion, with some thought being given to the idea of white towels being used to show someone is home and has not evacuated. Also, there was a suggestion to set up a door knock tree for Zone volunteer check-ins in the event power is out and communications are unavailable. Tom Porada also noted that we can use walkie talkies in each of the six Zones, and each volunteer could then communicate with their Zone Leads. Tom advised he would look into pricing for this option (approximately $14/each in bulk) and protocols. There was a comment that one volunteer could not utilize the repeater with his walkie talkie, and Tom clarified that only the Retevis radios have that ability. These radios may also be signed out to BOD members and the GM so that they can communicate with GP-CERT in the aftermath of storms.**

**There was then a discussion and update on TS Nicole. While it was expected to be a Cat 1 upon landfall, we anticipate that**

**Venice will get wind gusts up to 40-45 MPH and 1-3 inches of rain with the worst weather from late afternoon Wednesday until mid-day Thursday. There is really no need to deploy hurricane shutters, but you should secure any loose items on your lanai.**

**The next item discussed was ‘The GP Responder’ newsletter, which we started up in September of 2020. Holtby advised that we have published eight issues so far – and we have received wonderful community feedback. The next issue of The GP Responder is scheduled to go out in mid-to-late December – and if you have Ian aftermath pictures, please send them to Holtby, as we would like to feature them in our next issue.**

**Holtby still views communications to be our team’s “weak link” and a key item we need to improve upon in 2023- as Ian showed the importance of it. We did have a communications Net Check-in just prior to the regular meeting – and we had good results - but we need to do better.**

**We then briefly touched on recruitment – still our biggest challenge and biggest opportunity in the aftermath of Ian. We need to update the trifolds with pictures of Ian, and then hit the recruitment path hard.**

**Marci Maynard had previously consented to become our Treasurer, but she was unable to make this meeting. Sal had agreed to be our Special Events Coordinator. We also need to establish a Planning Committee so that we can publish exactly when we will hold all meetings and special events in 2023 – such as Yellow Box drill, Family Safety Day, and Training. We have a new Logistics Officer, Cheryl Heeren, and a new Deputy Incident Commander – Brian Sheftel, with Sal Baglio stepping into the Zone 5 Lead role with Brian’s changed role. We also agreed to have Brian Sheftel take the Incident Commander role in any storm event given his extensive first responder background. We will work on the operational plan to map out exactly how this scenario will work, but for TS Nicole, Brian would be the Incident Commander.**

**Rich MacCready then did a briefing on Storm Drains and how each Zone can handle pre and post storm blockages for the 57 ponds going forward for the educational aspect of the meeting. He and Jean Koch again cleaned them prior to TS Nicole, and he advised that there is a lot of debris in our ponds which may cause problems in the future. We will be meeting with the Ponds Committee to discuss our respective roles going forward so our community is taken care of – with a meeting scheduled for December 7th at 2 pm.**

**There was a lot of discussion regarding the need to update our operational plan, and we will schedule a meeting in early December with volunteers from all areas in attendance to start the process. Bob Browne will coordinate this effort with Holtby. Jay Alvord also mentioned that we will be able to add a tab to the new KW website that will direct residents to our own GP-CERT.org website. Brian Sheftel mentioned that the Gran Paradiso CERT Facebook site now has 160 followers, and he encouraged everyone to give it a try.**

**Gene Pliska mentioned that they would be having a CPR class on November 15th at 6 pm through the Activities Committee, with a maximum of 20 people per class.**

**The tentative date for our next meeting is Tuesday, January 10th at 6 pm. Holtby would appreciate the Command Team doing their radio check-in between 5:30 and 6:00 pm that day.**