**Monday, March 13th, 2023 GP-CERT Meeting Minutes:**

**Holtby welcomed everyone and thanked them for adjusting their schedules this month to Monday rather than our usual Tuesday. He offered a special welcome to those attending their first GP-CERT meeting. Holtby requested that everyone sign one of the attendance sheets and he noted that GP-CERT Volunteer Information forms were also on the back table. Holtby advised that tonight’s meeting should last approximately an hour.**

**First agenda item:**

**Since there were a few new attendees, Holtby provided them with a little background and history of GP-CERT. First, explaining what CERT does - the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Volunteers do not have to take any CERT training courses, but Holtby advised that having personally taken some of these FEMA courses - he highly recommended it. He noted that GP-CERT is also extremely fortunate to have several volunteers who have taken advanced courses which certify them to provide the training here at GP. Holtby noted that much of the training can now be done on-line at your own pace, and that courses are also held at the State College of Florida, right across the street. He advised that GP-CERT plans to hold classes here at GP or in conjunction with IslandWalk later in 2023.**

**Holtby provided some history on GP-CERT - our initial organizational meeting was in January of 2019 – 16 months after Hurricane Irma hit Florida. GP-CERT received $1,500 from the water aerobics club to get us started up. We then applied for a $9,600 Sarasota County Neighborhood Initiative Grant in late 2019 – which we had to “match” with volunteer hours at $20/hour or nearly 500 hours. This grant allowed us to purchase much needed equipment, including communication equipment. We started with approximately 30 volunteers, and today have around 85. We have an incredible ”core” group of around 25 volunteers who step up for almost anything that is asked of them. The essence of a CERT volunteer is someone who cares about their community, and is emotionally invested in it.**

**If you would like to know more about CERT, Holtby recommended taking the on-line FEMA course IS-317 “Introduction to CERT”. He advised that it is relatively easy to sign up for a FEMA account on-line and then take courses at your leisure. Holtby advised that you can also reach out to him or any of the Command Team by telephone, text, or email at any time. All of the Command Team contact information is listed on the GP-CERT.org web-site. Holtby also reminded everyone that we also have a** **granparadisocert@gmail.com****email address.**

**Holtby noted that at our last two meetings we talked extensively about what we did right during Hurricane Ian and what we could have improved on. He stressed the need to implement some of those changes prior to the 2023 hurricane season – which kicks off June 1. Also, for those who follow the weather closely - in last week’s NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) weather advisory, it announced that after three nasty years, the La Nina weather phenomenon that increases Atlantic hurricane activity is gone. NOAA predicts that there is a 61% chance that El Nino will take charge come fall. What does that mean for Florida - La Nina has historically increased tropical activity while its weather extreme counterpart, El Nino, does the opposite. It favors more activity in the Pacific and suppresses activity in the Atlantic. If El Nino makes an appearance later this year, Florida would be in for cooler and rainier conditions, especially in the winter. Those conditions inhibit the development of tropical storms – but the neutral phase we are now in can still bring a busy hurricane season like in 2017, when Hurricane Irma hit Florida.**

**The Second Agenda item kicks off Updates and Plans:**

**The first update item was an update on the Operational Plan. Sal advised that he, Brian, and Bob Browne have been meeting on the plan and the effort is going well, but it is more involved than originally anticipated. He advised that Access Control may be eliminated, as GP-CERT cannot exert much control over access once the gates are taken down. There was a robust discussion on this, and the consensus appeared to be that it made sense to eliminate this area.**

**The second update item discussed by Holtby was the “The GP Responder”. He noted that we had published our tenth issue in December - with our next issue scheduled for later this month. Holtby thanked those volunteers who are regular contributors, and offered a special thanks to Carole and Jeff Myles who continue to do a great job with the newsletter. He noted that we have a few things for the March issue lined up – but that we could use a few more articles – we are looking for 100-150 words on anything with a safety or weather focus that would be of interest to the GP community.**

**The third update item on the agenda was Training & Education. Holtby provided a brief update on the Passenger Aircraft Disaster Response Exercise that a number of GP-CERT volunteers participated in. A full scale or “live” PADRE exercise is required by the Federal Aviation Administration every third year. An Allegiant Airlines plane was utilized, and airport activity was shifted to the “other” side of the Terminal to the extent possible. Holtby advised that he had never seen so many Fire, Police, and EMS vehicles in one location after the drill started. The plane was “on fire” and all of the volunteers had different roles to play – Holtby advised that he was on the plane and was to act confused – with no knowledge of the plane crash incident believing he was still in my office & looking for his wallet. Ed Litcher then provided his perspective on the PADRE, and he will be providing a detailed review in our next newsletter. Holtby advised that if you get an opportunity to participate in one of these drills in the future – he highly recommends it. He noted that the thing it highlighted for him was the need to for GP-CERT to have drills and practice for all situations which may face our community.**

**Brian and Sal then provided an update on education and training, touching upon the Yellow Box drill (likely scheduled for Wednesday, May 24th), Family Safety Day (date still to be determined), and future basic/refresher CERT training courses.**

**The fourth Update item discussed was Communications, a key area for a community as large as ours - which had its own challenges during Ian. Tom Porada discussed the net communications drill held prior to our meeting and noted he needs to check in some equipment to the guard house.**

**Holtby added that we need to distribute Retevis radios to all GP Board members prior to our next meeting and to look at purchasing and providing “walkie-talkies” for inter-zone communications.**

**The fifth Update item was Recruitment – one of our biggest challenges - an area that Holtby noted we need to rethink for 2023, with 2-3 recruitment “events” in 2023 – in a format still to be determined. Holtby advised that there will be a brief meeting after the main one to talk about recruitment, so anyone willing to help out on the recruitment front – please stay put.**

**Four people met after the primary meeting, and the synopsis was that we need “fun” events that residents “really” want to attend. Ken Rodwogin provided a number of examples of events that had been undertaken by CERTs up north, and the group agreed to look into increasing our presence at all GP events going forward, particularly given the continued lack of awareness of GP-CERT within our community.**

**Sixth Update item – Command Team Changes**

**Holtby advised that to avoid confusion, Brian Sheftel will have the Incident Commander title going forward and he will have the Deputy Incident Commander and Administrative Lead title so as to avoid any confusion in a storm event.**

**Holtby advised that we now have a new Triage Team lead – Jan Laughlin – who could not be here tonight as she was up at the airport. Jan comes with 35 years experience as an RN, the last 25 being in Critical care and emergency room nursing.  She is trained in ESI triage and  has an understanding of mass casualty triage. Jan will work with Barbara Litcher to transition the position and will likely reach out to other team members soon.**

**Holtby advised that while we filled the Triage Team Coordinator position, we need a new Logistics Officer, as Cheryl Heeren is stepping down from that role. He asked that anyone interested in this position let him know.**

**Agenda Item 3 was Q&A and Open Discussion: Holtby advised that the date for our next meeting is Tuesday, May 9th at 6 pm. He requested that the Command Team do their radio check-in between 5:30 and 6:00 pm that day.**

**Agenda Item 4 Teach-back Disaster Psychology – Brian did an excellent job compressing an hour and a half CERT basic training unit (the psychological impact a disaster has on rescuers and survivors, and lessons on providing components of “psychological first aid) into approximately 15 minutes. Some highlights - reactions to psychological trauma can result from:**

* **Dealing with your own personal losses;**
* **Working in your neighborhood;**
* **Assisting neighbors, friends, coworkers who have**

**been injured; and**

* **Feeling unsafe and insecure.**

**Humans typically have five primary responses to stress – we refer to those as the “Five Fs,” which are: 1) freeze, 2) flight, 3) fight, 4) fright, and 5) faint. Our bodies have both physical and psychological responses to stressful events. Brian advised that reducing stress can come from any of the following preventative actions:**

* **Get enough sleep;**
* **Exercise regularly;**
* **Eat a balanced diet;**
* **Balance work, play, and rest;**
* **Allow themselves to receive as well as give;**
* **Remember that their identity is broader than that**

**of a helper;**

* **Connect with others; and**
* **Use spiritual resources.**
* **Provide support by:**

**Brian noted that listening and letting people talk aboiut their feelings and physical needs is important— they want someone to listen to them. Empathy is also important and equally important is what not to say:**

* **“I understand.” In most situations, we cannot understand unless we have had the same experience.**
* **“Don’t feel bad.” The survivor has a right to feel bad and will need time to feel differently.**
* **“You’re strong” or “You’ll get through this.” Many survivors do not feel strong and question if they will recover from the loss.**
* **“Don’t cry.” It is okay to cry.**
* **“It’s God’s will.” With a person you do not know,**

**giving religious meaning to an event may insult or**

**anger the person.**

* **“It could be worse,” at least you still have...”, or**

**“Everything will be okay.” It is up to the individual to decide whether things could be worse or if everything can be okay.**

**Instead, always ask permission to enter their space, provide help, or interact with them. Allow people to say what they need. Normalize what they are feeling and thinking using phrases similar to the ones below:**

* **“I’m sorry for your pain.”**
* **“I’m so sorry this has happened.”**
* **“Is it all right if I help you with...?”**
* **“I can’t imagine what this is like for you.”**
* **“What do you need?”**

**Training is important and this is just a little snippet of the disaster psychology lesson.**

**Agenda Item 5: Holtby thanked everyone for their attendance tonight.**