**Tuesday, July 11th, 2023 GP-CERT Meeting Minutes:**

**Holtby welcomed everyone and offered a special welcome to anyone attending their first GP-CERT meeting. He requested everyone sign one of the attendance sheets on the table at the back of the room and mentioned that tonight’s meeting should last approximately one hour and 15 minutes due to a teach-back scenario at the end of the meeting.**

**Holtby provided some perspective on the 2023 hurricane season: which is a once-in-a-generation slugfest between twin titans of the Tropics.  In one corner, the Unstoppable Force of an incipient El Niño, and in the other, the Immovable Object that is the scorching Tropical Atlantic, packing an explosive thermodynamic punch. These two atmospheric heavyweights have never been more diametrically opposed entering a hurricane season than in 2023, making for an uncertain seasonal outlook.**

**El Niño is the warmer half of a cycle known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO). Key Niño features include sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the Central Equatorial Pacific of more than 0.5°C above normal and an interlocking regime of weaker trade winds and increased convection in the same area. Once this feedback cycle begins, El Niños usually persist for around a year. The average number of Florida hurricane impacts in El Niño years is less than half that of La Niñas. Once firmly established, El Niño is the single strongest pre-season predictor of U.S. landfall activity.**

**In the other corner is something called the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation, or AMO which is essentially cyclical Atlantic ocean warming and cooling patterns. The AMO doesn’t have quite the dominance of ENSO, as Atlantic warmth can ebb and flow on short notice in a way that a mature El Niño does not. However, warm AMO regimes still have considerably higher hurricane risks in both the continental U.S. and Florida. The average number of annual U.S. hurricane impacts is about 35% higher during a warm AMO than a cool AMO, and around 60% higher in Florida.**

**Warm AMO is flying high now. In fact, surface sea temperatures in the linchpin regions of the eastern Atlantic are well over previous records and rising. These warm sea surface temperature anomalies also closely conform to the regions where ocean temperatures have the strongest historical relationship with busy hurricane seasons. In the absence of an onrushing El Niño, this pattern and its extreme amplitude would be extraordinarily alarming. As is, it sets up an ENSO vs. AMO battle. NOAA predicts that there is a 61% chance that El Nino will take charge come fall. If El Nino makes an appearance later this year, Florida would be in for cooler and rainier conditions, especially in the winter.**

**Holtby noted that the current model is calling for U.S. landfall risks close to long-term averages, with around a 45% chance of U.S. tropical activity coming in close to normal. That translates into a 25% chance of three or more hurricane impacts, a 55% chance of 1 or 2 impacts, and a 20% chance that the continental U.S. escapes 2023 without a hurricane encounter**

**Near term, Holtby noted that the only region to watch is a**[**non-tropical area of low pressure well east of Bermuda**](https://substack.com/redirect/1694b710-1913-4829-a007-075a29ac7ecb?j=eyJ1IjoibmVxam8ifQ.KVkrGB21zQaB_e6nvR3wR8fNAt4AJ7T1v-wve_h1WK8)**. There is a fair chance that this system takes on some subtropical characteristics as it meanders the open Atlantic over the next two to four days before moving east, but is no threat to land. Otherwise, the**[**Atlantic is dusty**](https://substack.com/redirect/8b4776d6-df45-48f7-b202-faaf754bb635?j=eyJ1IjoibmVxam8ifQ.KVkrGB21zQaB_e6nvR3wR8fNAt4AJ7T1v-wve_h1WK8)**, quiet, and likely to stay that way for at least another week. The eastern Main Development Region may start to rouse in 8 to 12 days heading into late July.**

**Holtby also discussed which hurricane forecast model is best to follow. Studies have shown that the official National Hurricane Center forecast bested all individual models last year and equaled the best model blends at all lead times. Crucially, NHC forecasts are also far more c*onsistent*than any individual model, which typically jump around 100 miles or so each six hours at a four-day lead time. NHC four-day forecasts are not only more skillful than individual models, but shift less than 60 miles on average between advisories.**

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

**First item under Updates - Command Team Changes: Holtby noted that we have a new Communications Officer, Richard MacCready, who is taking over from Tom Porada. MacCready is working on number of initiatives to improve communications post-event. MacCready then provided his Communications update due to having to leave early. He touched on the Net Radio Check-in done prior to the meeting, and noted that he was working on improvements to our existing communications efforts, which failed during Ian.**

**Holtby noted that our new logistics officer is Jean Townley, who has already been out reorganizing all the GP-CERT material in the guardhouse. Holtby thanked Cheryl Heeren for her work in this role previously. All Zone boxes have been picked up by Zone leads.**

**The second Update item dealt with the Operational Plan update, which was covered extensively during the May meeting. Brian and Sal recommended that everyone go onto our GP-CERT website (gp-cert.org) to read it and mentioned that it was still being revised. Tonight’s scenario feedback will also be incorporated in the plan.**

**The third update item concerned the “The GP Responder”. We published our twelfth issue in June and our next issue is scheduled for September. Thank you to those volunteers who are regular contributors, and a special thanks to Carole and Jeff Myles who continue to do a fabulous job on the newsletter. We don’t have anything lined up yet for the September – but I want everyone please consider contributing an article – 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 fourth Update item on the agenda was Training & Education. Kristi Loret provided an update on the postponement of the yellow box drill and plans for a CERT basic training course in the September time frame. Sheftel provided some detail on what is covered in the training, and Loret advised that we need to have a minimum of 10 attendees to justify holding the course. When she inquired who might be interested, Loret had seven attendees indicate their interest in taking the course, and she requested they let either Holtby or Loret know of their interest and contact info.**

**The sixth Update item was Recruitment – which Holtby noted continues to be one of our and all Sarasota County CERTs biggest challenges. Holtby advised that the Command Team met with the Board on June 29th to discuss Storm Protocol in view of what we learned from Ian. Holtby was happy to report that the Board was amenable to having GP-CERT on the New Business Agenda for future Board meetings so that we can promote the team. In addition, they were amenable to paying for GP-CERT’s on-going operating expenses (ie. repeater battery replacement- batteries need to be replaced every three years). GP-CERT may be a “line item” on the 2024 budget, probably only a dollar or two every year per GP home, but the visibility this should afford us will be invaluable.**

**Holtby also advised that he met with Tami Prince, the new LifeStyle Director earlier in the day. There is a Storm Aware and Prepare Day on Wednesday, July 26th at 11 am in the clubhouse that had been spearheaded by Jeremy and Lisa Thompson of Home Watch Reporters. GP-CERT will have a table set up to provide information and assist with recruitment. Thompson felt this event would be an informative training event for the entire GP-CERT as one of the exhibitors is a prior storm chaser.**

**Hosts and presenters include Paul Clark of Renegade Roofing and Storm Consultants and Ken Siders, Senior Forensic Assessor & Managing Director of ETA Environmental, an expert in mold remediation, amongst others. If anyone is available to assist in staffing a GP-CERT table to pass out material, please let Holtby or Sal Baglio know. We will also be passing out flyers at this event highlighting a GP-CERT event to be held on Thursday, August 10th, starting at 6 pm in the clubhouse, with featured speaker Ed McCrane of the Sarasota County Emergency Operations Center. Pizza will be provided after the presentations. Please let Sal Baglio know if you are available to assist with this event.**

**Sal Baglio is also in the process of putting together a GP-CERT volunteer shirt order, so if you have not responded to him – please do so. GP-CERT will be covering the entire cost of the shirt order to increase the “visibility” of our incredible group of volunteers.**

**Post Ian, a number of communities are looking at starting up CERT teams – and Holtby noted that we have met with Stoneybrook and The Preserve over the last month. Recruitment is easiest the closer we are to the last storm event. Holtby advised that we may do another cap fundraiser, as that is another way to increase our community visibility. Holtby noted that if anyone has any other recruitment thoughts or ideas, to please let him know.**

**Agenda Item 3 was Q&A and Open Discussion:**

**A few miscellaneous items – Sal Baglio, who heads up the Special Events area, could always use more assistance – so if interested, please let him know. Holtby also noted that the date for our next meeting is Tuesday, September 12th at 6 pm.**

**Agenda Item 4 Teach-back was a scenario in which GP receives a tornado warning, and a few hours later GP is hit by a tornado, which causes structural damage and flooding. The attendees broke up into Zones and discussed GP-CERT’s approach to an event of this nature. All comments were consolidated by Sal Baglio for inclusion into the Operational Plan. Feedback from the attendees was excellent.**

**Agenda Item 5: Holtby thanked everyone for their attendance tonight and adjourned the meeting.**