Wednesday, February 5, 2020 GP-CERT Meeting:

I want to thank everyone who came out a little early tonight. We wanted to give you a little introductory overview of the Gran Paradiso – Community Emergency Response Team, and an opportunity to ask any questions prior to the main meeting, which will start at 6 pm. As we only have 30 minutes, I will go through some basics fairly quickly, and request that you hold any questions until the end.

My name is Gordon Holtby, and my wife and I moved here in July of 2017 (2-1/2 years ago).  I want to first emphasize that this meeting is not about how to prepare “your” home for an impending hurricane. However, if you would like information on this topic, I have with me a copy of the Disaster Planning Guide, which provides a detailed evacuation zone map with the shelter lists and information for what to do before, during and after a storm. An updated version of this Guide is put out in May of each year by Sarasota County, so there are very few copies of the Guide available, except in Spanish.

At this time, we do not have a new training orientation developed for the GP-CERT program.  Our neighbor, IW-CERT kicked off a new training orientation initiative in October (which several of our residents attended) and we may do something similar in the future.  An orientation program would address such topics as: What is CERT, The Incident Command System (ICS), What is GP-CERT, What do we do, What is Disaster Preparedness, Mobilization and Deployment, Radio Communication, and more.

I want to stress that our volunteers do not have to undertake training and make a time commitment to taking FEMA-developed CERT classes. All training is voluntary, and is free to all GP-CERT volunteers.

What Role Does a Community Emergency Response Team Play After a Disaster?

During the initial hours following a catastrophic disaster such as a hurricane, emergency services personnel may be overloaded and not

be able to help everyone immediately – so CERT volunteers can make a difference by using their CERT training to help save lives and protect property.

You and your family, as well as the GP community may be on our own for a period of time because of the size of the area affected, lost communications and impassable roads. FEMA advises that in a crisis, you should plan to be totally on your own for up to seven days (previously it was 72 hours).

What is the Gran Paradiso – Community Emergency Response Team and what do we do?

The Gran Paradiso - Community Emergency Response Team (“GP-CERT”) program educates people to prepare them for natural or man-made disasters that may impact our area. GP-CERT members are trained in basic disaster preparedness, survival and response skills including: team organization, fire safety, disaster medical operations and light search and rescue in the aftermath of a disaster. Our disaster plan also provides a degree of access control whereby we have volunteers man the front and rear gates to our help yourself, your family and your neighbors in the event of a catastrophic disaster. With training and practice and by working as a team, you will be able to do the greatest good for the greatest number of victims after a disaster – while protecting yourself from becoming a victim.

Using skills developed during classroom training and field exercises, CERT members are prepared to assist others immediately after a disaster has occurred, providing basic levels of support and care to their families and neighbors in need.

We have three different volunteer teams in GP-CERT, Damage Assessment, Communications, and Access Control.  The Damage Assessment Team has Gran Paradiso broken out into six Zones and there is one Zone Leader for each Zone.  This is the area with the greatest need for volunteers, as each Zone Team would be responsible for assessing damage in their area by going street-to-street and home-to-home. Responsibilities for each team are detailed in the GP-CERT Plan of Operations, which is updated regularly. I have 10 copies of the Plan of Operations with me, so please let me know if you would like a copy of it.

We are also compiling a GP-CERT volunteer database (including expertise and equipment our volunteers currently own) utilizing the GP-CERT volunteer information forms. If you would like to become a volunteer, please fill out one of these forms and leave it with me tonight.

Top of Form

Questions?

Bottom of Form

Regular Meeting:

First, if everyone who has not already done so would sign in on one of the sheets that are on the back tables, that would be greatly appreciated. We are able to count everyone’s meeting attendance tonight as one volunteer hour against our Sarasota County Neighborhood Initiative grant, which as most of you know, we have to match at $20/volunteer hour.

I believe that the meeting tonight should run about one hour.  I wanted to start tonight’s meeting off by apologizing to everyone that I have not been very responsive to your inquiries and emails. My wife, Jo, who is with us tonight, went into the hospital on January 3rd for emergency gall bladder removal surgery, developed sepsis – which prolonged her hospital stay, and then one week after coming home had a large blood clot move up into her right lung that resulted in another hospital stay.  Next, I wanted to provide an update on some of the things that have transpired since our last meeting in early December:

1. We have started to purchase equipment with the proceeds of our Sarasota County Neighborhood Initiative Grant – which was approved in the amount of $9,761.92. We have some orange traffic cones, some large Zone bins, and a lot of supplies such as Israeli bandages for the CERT backpacks. We are working with Grant Gorski to purchase equipment and supplies on a monthly basis, as we can only spend $2,500-3,500 per month on the HOA credit card. This equipment will be stored in one of the rooms at the guardhouse, and we are in the process of ensuring that it is a secure site.  Our next purchase will include a large sturdy canopy/tent for a command and triage center, as well as assorted supplies. We should be done with our purchase in mid-March, in plenty of time for the official start of hurricane season on July 1.
* As mentioned in my opening remarks, we started to track GP-CERT volunteer hours as of November 6th, as we need to match the $9,761.92 with volunteer hours at $20/hour, or roughly 490 hours. With tonight’s attendance, I am very pleased to announce that we are at roughly 250 volunteer hours, so we are half-way there. Thank you everyone for your efforts, particularly those who are taking the CERT basic training, as I receive a copy of your hours from Joe Wyatt each week. Keep up the great work, and don’t forget to sign in when you volunteer, or request a form from me. If Zone leaders have a zone meeting or the triage team meets, please remember to track volunteer attendance and time spent.

If you ever considered taking some CERT training, please consider doing so this year. Classes fill up quickly now that there are other communities in the area starting up CERT programs. Thank you to all those volunteers who have signed up for the Stop the Bleed training, as well as those who have volunteered as “victims” for the CERT basic training field exercise.

Please also track any time spent on online FEMA courses such as FEMA IS-317:"Introduction to Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)." The IS-317  is an independent study course that serves as an introduction to CERT for those interested in completing the CERT Basic Training. I have a volunteer form for those volunteers who have completed this on-line training subsequent to November 6.

* Many CERT volunteers from GP-CERT and neighboring CERTs attended the Sarasota County Commissioner meeting on Tuesday, January 14th. Thank you to those who were able to attend.  Three of the CERT leaders spoke during the public comment section prior to the formal meeting. It appears as though our concerns were heard, as on Monday of this week, I had a conversation with Ed McCrane, Emergency Management Chief of the Sarasota County Emergency Operations Center. He advised that an email would be coming out to all of the CERT leadership inviting us to a March 6th briefing at the Sarasota County EOC:

“ We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to a Community Emergency Response Team Neighborhood Leaders Workshop being held at the Sarasota County Emergency Operations Center.

The workshop will be held on Friday March 6th from 1:00 to 3:00 PM at 6050 Porter Way, Sarasota 34232

During this workshop the EM team will brief you on the following:

* Provide update on the plan we have been working on to revitalize the CERT program
* Explain the development of the Multi-County CERT Consortium and the Partnership with State College of Florida
* Discuss upcoming class schedule and training opportunities.
* Discuss CERT connection and communication to EOC during disaster.
* Discuss next steps for a County CERT coalition for CERT leadership
* Tour of EOC

We look forward to seeing you in our EOC and working together to enhance the CERT Program.”

We will apparently be able to provide feedback on what we would like to see from the county at this meeting. McCrane advised that they also plan to have a quarterly meeting or conference call with the CERT leaders, as well as to provide flash reports from the EOC to the CERT leaders when there are potential hurricane events developing. They were also amenable to a pre-season hurricane briefing for our community prior to the official launch of the hurricane season on July 1st.  McCrane also offered to provide a separate tour of the Sarasota County EOC for GP-CERT.  Does anyone have an interest if we set it up? I will pass around a sign-up sheet with preferred days of the week. It would have to be during normal business hours.

* We are still kicking around fundraising ideas, so any suggestions would be welcomed.

Today, I pulled the trigger on 158 Core 365 Adult Pitch Performance caps with Gran Paradiso embroidery (there will be 88 white caps with dark purple embroidery and 70 charcoal grey caps with a slightly brighter purple/red embroidery that says “Gran Paradiso” [in large print] and “at the West Villages” in smaller print below Gran Paradiso).  All-in-cost was just under $8.50/cap, so I would propose to sell them for $15 each.  We need to be able to double our money, so if we can get them in the $7.50-8.00 range and sell them for $15, it might make sense. [158 caps at $6.50 profit/cap is $1,027].

The caps will be available for sale in approximately one week. I would like to get a couple of volunteers who would be willing to coordinate this process. We would need to set up a table at any GP events, and volunteers staffing the tables would accrue volunteer hours. Any takers?

* To increase our visibility and to help sell GP caps, we are also discussing a family fire safety day in March or April with the Sarasota County or North Port Fire Department, ideally with a fire “pad” like we had in CERT Basic training - teaching residents how to put out a fire correctly.  Unfortunately, the fire extinguisher prop that North Port had can’t be repaired. Todd Green is working on a short-term solution and will let me know as soon as he figures something out. He is happy to set up a home fire safety presentation for you. We can still incorporate fire extinguisher familiarization into the presentation and provide some hands on training.

I have also set up a meeting with Mike Rodrigue of Sarasota County Fire Department for Tuesday, February 11th at 10 am at Station 16 (Clark Road/I-75) to discuss a community fire safety day. I would like to have someone join me to work with Mike in setting up something for our community in conjunction with myself. Any takers?

6.      David Elwart has spent a considerable amount of time putting together a GP-CERT Hurricane Desktop Exercise. Dave, would you discuss this in more detail?

Action Items:

1. Web-site: If anyone can help out by taking a few pictures or helping out with a regular GP-CERT newsletter, please let me know. I need to work with Cheryl Heeren on schedules –which I have been delinquent on.
2. We now need a new Access Control Lead, as well as a Zone Leader for Zone 4. Lance Williams resigned after having a disagreement with the HOA. Anyone who may be interested, please let me or any of the Command Team know at your earliest convenience.
3. We still need to put together training in conjunction with IslandWalk CERT. Mitch and Priscilla have attended a number of IW CERT meetings, and we have discussed how to incorporate some of their ideas (such as “teach-backs”) into our meetings.
4. Volunteers to coordinate cap sales.
5. Someone to accompany me to Sarasota County FD next Tuesday morning.
6. We are looking at ways to recruit additional GP-CERT volunteers, so please continue to talk to your neighbors.

Dates to Keep in Mind:

* Our next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 1st (April Fool’s Day) at 6 pm, with new volunteer orientation at 5:30 pm. I have requested this date from Loraine, but will not hear back from her until tomorrow.
* Mitch/Tom, anything to add?