**Tuesday, January 9th, 2024 GP-CERT Meeting Minutes:**

**Holtby welcomed everyone and extended a special welcome to those residents attending their first GP-CERT meeting. He advised that tonight’s meeting would be a little quicker than normal due to the weather and should last around 45 minutes.**

**Holtby provided an update on his wife, who was attending her first meeting since fracturing her C2 vertebra in late October. She is healing up nicely, is nearly “weaned” off her cervical collar, and starts physical therapy a couple of times a week later this month. Holtby thanked all those who had reached out to both of them over the last three+ months.**

**Holtby then started into the agenda – Updates/Plans, and he noted that the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season was marked by a larger-than-average number of storms occurring earlier in the season, and that the storms intensified extremely rapidly – giving impacted areas much less notice and opportunity to evacuate safely.  He advised that all of us will need to look closely at this in 2024, as it will change how we prepare for potential storms that may impact Gran Paradiso.**

**Holtby talked about the fact that we being impacted by an El Nino weather pattern or cycle. El Nino winters tend to be characterized by above normal risks of severe weather in Florida and the Southeast U.S. He noted that we are seeing that outside today, with a powerful low and associated cold front bringing potentially damaging winds, coastal flooding, the chance of tornadoes, and heavy rainfall to parts of Florida. The experts feel that the first quarter of 2024 likely will be cooler and wetter than normal, with temperatures turning notably colder starting around the 15th of January. The longer-range forecast for February also appears a little cooler than average.**

**Holtby advised that a preliminary, but very early look at the 2024 hurricane season shows the stars aligning for a very busy hurricane season. The rationale for this: 1) the Tropical Atlantic remains much warmer than average; 2) El Nino winters and springs tending to have weak trade winds across the Tropical Atlantic, favoring continued (or increased!) Atlantic ocean warmth; and 3) there is rising consensus for a rapid weaking of El Nino heading into spring and summer and a return to La Nina conditions in the second half of 2024. La Nina is much worse for us, as major hurricane landfalls occur three times more frequently compared with El Nino seasons. While it is difficult to predict this early, the early forecast has 2024 having an 80% chance of being in the top 1/3 of most active hurricane seasons since 1950.**

**Holtby noted that we will transitioning David Elwart’s Tempest weather station and associated app over to GP-CERT this quarter. He anticipates the station will continue to be part of the** [**www.wunderground.com**](http://www.wunderground.com) **or Weather Underground network of sensors (Venice East station). Rich MacCready has volunteered to have the weather station on his property.**

**The second Update item concerned the “The GP Responder”. Holtby noted that GP-CERT published its fourteenth issue in December. He said he was a little disappointed, as for the first time in four years we had to “recycle” a couple of articles due to lack of contributors. Holtby encouraged everyone to please consider contributing an article – he mentioned 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 is Training & Education and Kristi Loret provided an update on education and training plans for 2024. She noted that our last training class had been in the library, and our biggest challenge is finding enough space on consecutive dates. Loret advised that another CERT basic training class will likely be held in late August or in the September/October time frame. She also advised that she would like to have a “refresher” course for those who took basic training a number of years ago. Jay Alvord mentioned that the craft room could be partitioned off – leaving half of it available to GP-CERT for future training, and this is something that we will follow up with Michelle and Tami on.**

**Holtby noted that North Port Fire Rescue is hosting its Inaugural Open House on Saturday January 20th between 10 am and 2 pm at its 6664 W. Price Blvd location adjacent to the high school in North Port. He encouraged volunteers to attend if they didn’t have anything else going just to show our support. Holtby noted that there are a couple of flyers for this event on the back table.**

**Holtby also mentioned that Rich MacCready is President of the SRQ CERT Association – which was created in November of 2023 to better coordinate efforts between the 58 Sarasota County CERTs and the Sarasota County Emergency Operation Center. The next open house meeting will be up a the EOC offices on Saturday, February 3rd at 9:00 am. It provides all CERT members with an opportunity to see the Sarasota County EOC, so Holtby advised that if anyone wants to attend, to either let him or MacCready know.**

**The fourth Update item is Communications and our Communications Officer, Richard MacCready, provided an update on the net check-in, which included all six Zone leaders and many other Command Team members on a night where the weather was awful. Holtby noted that Communications is one of the keys to the success of any CERT.**

**The fifth Update item is Recruitment – which continues to be a challenge for all 58 CERT teams within Sarasota County. Sal Baglio mentioned that we have 45-50 active GP-CERT members out of the 80+ who joined. We need to increase our visibility, and one way is GP cap sales, which was very successful previously. Brian Sheftel provided an update on the cap order – 200 caps ordered for $2,400 or roughly $12 each in different colors with different lettering. After a vote of the volunteers, we decided to keep the pricing at $20/cap or two for $35. Once we receive them, we will set up a table at various events, which will hopefully raise our visibility within the community.**

**The cap sales will help, and we will also need to set up tables at all GP community events to provide information to our residents about GP-CERT, possibly starting with the Town Hall in late January.**

**Holtby noted that it comes down to all of you – and he encouraged everyone to pick up a Volunteer Information Form from the back table and talk to one of your neighbors about getting involved in GP-CERT. Holtby also mentioned that if anyone had any other recruitment thoughts or ideas - to just send him an email.**

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

**Holtby mentioned at our last meeting that we really need to get started on events for 2024 - and to get them on the schedule well in advance. He would like to have our 2024 schedule of events and training firmed up by our next meeting if possible.**

**Donna Hurlock suggested that we provide information on GP-CERT to all new residents in the new homeowner KW welcome package. Subsequent to our meeting, Jay Alvord followed up with Michelle regarding having GP-CERT add two documents to the new homeowner/long-term renter welcome package, and she was amenable to this.  It was suggested that this information will contain a hurricane preparation letter with a small summary about hurricane season, an important safety items list, and emergency contact information for the local area.  It will also contain a "How to Volunteer" document for CERT with points of contacts, summary of what CERT does, and why it is important to volunteer.  The CERT team will provide all the documents and Holtby will start putting something together for feedback from the Command Team.**

**Holtby noted that the date for our next meeting is Tuesday, March 12th, 2024 at 6:30 pm. He then thanked everyone for their attendance.**