**September 10th, 2024 GP-CERT Meeting Minutes:**

**Holtby welcomed everyone and offered a special welcome to anyone attending their first GP-CERT meeting.**

**First Agenda Item: Holtby noted that it’s Tuesday, September 10th… day 102 of the 2024 hurricane season and 81 days to go. By total storm energy, the season is 43.5%, 54.4%, and 43.3% complete for the Atlantic, continental U.S., and Florida, respectively. He noted that the second week of September is the climatological peak of Atlantic hurricane season. Accumulated cyclone energy (ACE), a measure of the cumulative strength and longevity of storm activity, hits the historical 50% mark about September 12th, as does Florida’s landfall activity.**

**With no named storms forming in almost four weeks (Ernesto was the last on August 12th), the Tropical Atlantic looked abandoned in late August. However, Tropical Storm Francine has developed in the western Gulf of Mexico, upgraded from Potential Tropical Cyclone 6 based on Monday morning reconnaissance data showing a well-defined circulation has formed about 450 miles south of Houston. Francine is the combination of two disturbances (one frontal and one a tropical wave) which have just finished blending, so movement is a little uncertain, but the best guess is a north-northwest drift at about 5 mph. Impacts in Florida will likely be limited to outer rainbands. Francine is generating very deep convection near its new circulation center, which came together faster than the models anticipated. With**[**water temperatures in the 85-88F range, low shear, and plenty of moisture**](https://substack.com/redirect/10feb8f8-eb98-4763-ab89-eb16bd00c917?j=eyJ1IjoibmVxam8ifQ.KVkrGB21zQaB_e6nvR3wR8fNAt4AJ7T1v-wve_h1WK8)**to work with for the next 12 hours, continued strengthening is expected through early Wednesday. This intensification may be rapid (i.e. a 30 knot increase in 24 hours). The NHC is calling for**[**Francine to be a hurricane by late Tuesday and make landfall near its top intensity (85 mph) late Wednesday.**](https://substack.com/redirect/542c8cb0-95aa-42e2-9a5d-d6e188cbe161?j=eyJ1IjoibmVxam8ifQ.KVkrGB21zQaB_e6nvR3wR8fNAt4AJ7T1v-wve_h1WK8) **However, a peak at category 2 intensity would not be at all surprising, and even topping out as a major isn’t completely out of the question.**

**Holtby mentioned that there are a couple of other possible developing storms - Invest 92L, a tropical wave in the central Tropical Atlantic which the NHC is giving a 60% chance of two-day development, but little additional chance of organizing at longer range if it doesn’t develop in the near future. The reason for that is there is quite a bit of nearby dry air in the mid levels.**

**He noted that there are no other short or medium-range development threats on the map today. There are hints in the models that a broad low may take shape off the Southeast coast sometime next week, but this is at least 7 days off and dependent on how Francine plays out.**

**All the experts had been predicting a hyperactive hurricane season. Will that change? Holtby advised that there’s no strong evidence to support that right now. There are, however, indications that the surprisingly hostile environment suppressing storm development in the Tropical Atlantic for the past several weeks will become less unfavorable in about 10 days. Models are indicating that the dry air intrusions may tail off as well beyond the 15th. That could indicate better chances of a strong hurricane or two in late September, as there are plenty of historical major hurricanes in late September. Not all, but most curve north into the open Atlantic.**

**That said, Holtby noted that there’s still a long time to go. The rules of what makes for an active hurricane season may have been abruptly swapped out in 2024, but the strongest historical predictor, ocean temperatures, continues to signal that the hurricane season will more than likely flip to being active at some point. In the meantime, he wanted everyone to stay vigilant and be prepared.**

**Hitting Update Item 2 on our agenda – Holtby noted that the Command Team met with the new General Manager Scott Schlemmel today just prior to this meeting. The team provided him with a copy of our Operational Plan and we went over communication and other protocols in the event of a storm event at GP. We discussed being able to send out timely storm notifications, and that may be something we need residents to opt in or out of given privacy concerns. Overall, the meeting was productive, and we will need to ensure that we interface closely with KW and the BOD closely as storm events approach.**

**The third Update Item on our agenda was drones. Holtby recently had a drone discussion with a home inspector, who advised that he uses his drone license for search & rescue, and damage assessment down in Port Charlotte. He mentioned that drone prices continue to drop and drone capabilities continue to improve.**

**Holtby advised that he would like to look closely at CERT drone use in the aftermath of flooding or storms given how difficult it was to have the team deploy after Ian. It was his belief that CERT groups are ideal for drone programs. When first responders respond they are busy doing other duties unless you have a department that has dedicated drone pilots and that is all they do. CERT members can fill that role without distraction. The big issue appears to be liability (and the fact that drones are currently prohibited in GP), as drone use falls outside of normal CERT training - although Holtby noted that drones are now referenced extensively on FEMA's web-site.**

**Holtby advised that there are a number of CERTs around the country that use drones, and some of the drones appear ideal for CERT programs, including some designed primarily for Police, Fire and SAR. They are lightweight and compact UAS with 28-30 minute flight times with DUAL cameras (Visual and Infrared) which can operate simultaneously. Some can be set up and launched within 2 minutes. Total cost would be approximately $4K which includes a crystal sky display, extra batteries, prop guards, etc. Holtby noted that we would need to have a few volunteers take the time to study and pass the test for the FAA Part 107 license which is REQUIRED to be a UAS Pilot to operate for CERT or any other “Public Service” Agency.  He felt that one of the most difficult part 107 FAA rules to follow is to always keep the drone within sight of the operator. He noted that most of us have seen really cool footage of drones zipping around in all sorts of remote wilderness far away from the operator, but that doesn't happen legally in the U.S. It goes even further: if you use first-person viewing tech (like goggles or an iPad), you must have a secondary observer that can keep the drone within unaided (not even binoculars) sight.**

**Holtby further advised that we would need to coordinate with North Port FD/NPPD and Sarasota County EOC, as unless you have a strong sponsorship and working relationship with a government agency it is unlikely we would be successful. Holtby advised that he reached out to Anne Petera of IslandWalk-CERT on this topic, and she noted that they have discussed this a few times. They actually have a resident there who owns a drone (or a couple of them maybe) and is proficient in operating them. Being aware of the restrictions for licensing, and somewhat concerned about privacy issues, they have not pursued this idea further.**

**Rich MacCready also provided the following feedback: 1.  Drones are great for short-term data collection.  There would be a need for a "defined" plan so the customer/audience knows the expected area.**

**2.  It would be helpful in an event, safer for our personnel and possibly providing more "timely" information.**

**3.  We would need to define how we collect, analyze the information and then disseminate it to the proper personnel (would the EOC be able to receive and digest this information in a timely manner?)**

**4.  Rich felt that $4K is a fair amount of money for something that we might only use once or twice a year.  The drone would need to be maintained, properly stored, exercised, etc.  Rich wondered whether there would be any benefit to the onsite property management for any inspections.**

**5. As for CERT not having drones as part of their program, but are used by other CERT teams, I believe there are ad hoc supplements to CERT that need to be provided.  This is one of them.  Rich also felt that we should check in with Tim Simmons from Grand Palm, as he is actively pursuing a drone for his new CERT team.**

**Holtby then opened up the topic for discussion and suggested forming a small working group to look into drones in more detail. Joe Clark mentioned that he has a drone and the required license, feels it would be an excellent fit for GP-CERT, and offered to educate us on drones. A number of others offered to assist in putting together a working drone group to pursue whether it makes sense for us or not and Holtby will coordinate us getting together.**

**The Fourth Update Item on the Agenda concerns AEDs – as one of the Board members had reached out to Holtby and asked whether GP-CERT could take responsibility for the AEDs and the budget for them at GP. Rich worked fairly closely with him on the AEDs, and felt it was not appropriate for GP-CERT, which seemed to be the consensus feeling.**

**The Fifth Agenda item concerns the newsletter - “The GP Responder”. Holtby noted that our seventeenth issue will be sent out in September – it should have gone out already but due to personnel changes it has not. Holtby thanked all those volunteers who continue to submit articles. Carole Myles – who could not be at tonight’s meeting - sent him an email this week asking Holtby to put out a request for December newsletter 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. We have been profiling members of the Command Team in each issue, Brian Sheftel was featured in the June issue – Kristi in the September issue – and Sal Baglio was kind enough to volunteer for the December issue.**

**The Sixth Agenda item was Training & Education. Kristi Loret kicked off the Training & Education by passing out a certificate to Don Martin for successfully completing CERT Basic Training, and Don received a round of applause. She then outlined plans for the next several skills training sessions: October 19/20, 2024; March 15/16, 2025; June 21/22, 2025; with possible refresher training in August 2025. Kristi noted that the next Yellow Box drill will likely be sometime in February of 2025. Rich MacCready then provided a brief update on the Net Radio Check-in, which the Command Team does before every meeting, and this time it did not go well – so he will attempt to fix the problem and have another communications check-in shortly.**

**The Seventh Update item was Recruitment. Holtby reiterated that “Homeowner Apathy” is the foremost challenge facing the CERT community. He advised that we need proactive measures to enhance homeowner engagement. As always, he welcomed any and all recommendations to mitigate homeowner apathy. Holtby mentioned that Gran Paradiso At Wellen Park cap sales are on the slow side - we have sold 110 caps and still have 90 caps left to sell. There were a number of excellent suggestions on how to sell the rest, including posting on Facebook and in our quarterly newsletter. In addition, Kevin O’Donnell mentioned that there are two upcoming events where we might be able to sell hats: (1) The business showcase sponsored by Venice Chamber of Commerce on 10/16/24; and (2) the Wellen Volunteer Fair on 11/16/24. I will check to see if those events are feasible for us to sell at.**

**Holtby noted that the BOD had agreed to have a GP-CERT trifold and a “one-pager” included in all new resident packages, and hopefully this will continue to raise our profile within the community. Additional copies of the tri-fold were available on the table in the back of the room.**

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

**Holtby mentioned that the agenda was incorrect – our next meeting date is scheduled for Tuesday, November 12th, 2024 at 6:30 pm in the craft room. He advised that he will not be able to attend, as he will be out of country. There was no teachback today, so we moved on to Agenda Item 5: Adjournment – and Holtby thanked everyone for attending.**

**There will be a Zone Leader transition shortly in Zone 6, as Paddy Padmanabhan will be passing the torch on to Ron Donner. Thank you, Paddy for all your work over the years, and thank you Ron for stepping up to lead Zone 6.**

**PS. Holtby’s wife had a kidney stone (not diverticulitis) – which can be painful – and hopefully the stone will pass soon.**