

**Community Alliance of Sarasota County
Sarasota Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)**

June 9, 2008 Meeting Summary

Present

Alexander, Claire
Berns, Bob
DeLoach, Nancy
Glasser, Kay
Griffin, Michael
Hill, Beverly
Kopp, Barbara
Lacher, Miriam
LaFlame, Cheryl
Levesque, Elaine
McCrane, Ed
McLeod, Erin
Miller, Anne
Nieskes, Gary
Poswiatowski, Tammi
Pope, Bryan
Rezola, Inaki
Sawyer, James
Shipley, Dianne
Skivers, MJ
Sorter, Marion
Smith, Jerry
Stearns, Stewart
Stover, Dennis
Suarez, Alberto
Sullivan, Bill
Taylor, Chip
Wisner, Bruce
Wood, Sunie

Agency/Organization

Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Volunteer
Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Glasser/Schoenbaum Human Services Center
Sarasota County Health and Human Services
USF
Sarasota County Health and Human Services
SMH/Bayside
Coastal Behavioral Healthcare
First Step of Sarasota
Sarasota County Emergency Management
Senior Friendship Centers
Sarasota County Emergency Management
Lions Club International
Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Salvation Army
American Red Cross
Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Tidewell Hospice and Palliative Care
Friendship Volunteer Center
Lake County Emergency Management
Community Foundation of Sarasota County
Friendship Volunteer Center
United Way 2-1-1 of Manasota
American Red Cross
Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
Sarasota County Health and Human Services

Stewart Stearns welcomed the attendees. Self introductions were made. The meeting summary for the May 5, 2008 meeting was approved without changes.

**Volunteer Response and Lessons Learned –
Lake County Groundhog Day Tornadoes**

Anne Miller introduced Jerry Smith, Lake County Emergency Management Director, who will be speaking on the Ground Hog Day Tornadoes that affected Lake County.

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He noted that they could not have been as successful as they were without the help of the volunteer organizations. Lake County in cooperation with Sumter County will be setting up a formal VOAD/COAD in the near future.

Lake County is 1,100 square miles with a large lake in the center. The population is approximately 100,000. At the time of the tornadoes, the first responders had little communication available between the departments. They are now in the process of building an 800 mhz system that will unite them all on a common system.

Jerry introduced a series of slides of the event and did a step-by-step analysis. The first tornado was an EF3 striking at about 2:00 in the morning with 8 fatalities. The second tornado was in a separate location with 13 fatalities. He noted that the homes where all of the fatalities took place were pre-1992 mobile homes. \$26.5 million in damage occurred with 185 structures destroyed and close to 400 damaged.

They opened a shelter in an area known as Paisley. However, the people in this small community would not leave their property. As a result, tents were distributed with camping kits. Even with three more tornado warnings coming through, the people wouldn't leave. No special needs sheltering was required. There was a significant animal population that was displaced and had to be accommodated.

45+ different agencies came to help including representatives from Sarasota County Government. They put up 3 disaster recovery centers with the first being in operation within 60 hours, probably a record for the state. 39 FEMA trailers were set up with the first opening 8 days after the storm, another record.

They came up with the title, 'Operation Ground Hog Day Heroes,' to describe the many volunteer agencies that helped after the disaster.

Lessons learned:

- The suddenness of such an event can't be predicted. It is not like planning for a hurricane.
- Empowering the staff worked well. The politicians let the Emergency Management staff do their jobs without micromanaging the process.
- The devastation emotionally and physically was daunting for those affected.
- For most of the county, it was business as usual. This only affected less than .5% of the population. This includes the people that lost power.

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- Stay in the relief/response mode for as long as possible. The amount of state and federal funding being paid in the affected area dramatically decreases as soon as it is termed long-term recovery. They stayed in the response/recovery mode for 5 weeks and were only activated for 6 weeks.
- The state is there to help.
- Re-entry is a challenge.
- Keep records of everything. An incident action plan is vital. When working with agencies from out of the county, the IAP may need to be quite large. The situation reports became so long that it was unusable. He asked his planning staff to come up with a milestones report for the last 72 hours that is a snapshot of the information the situation report covers.
- You know the volunteers will be coming. You need to manage them and keep track of volunteer hours for FEMA purposes.
- The beauty of the Operation Ground Hog Day Heroes was that they could go on private property (with permission of the property owners) without costing the government any money to get the debris off the property and into the right-of-way so it can be picked up. As long as it is in the right-of-way, government is required to pick it up and can be reimbursed by FEMA.
- Have multiple ID tag makers in the go-kits so the VRC will be able to immediately begin work.
- There was a duplication of effort between the locals (ARC and Salvation Army feeding units) and those coming into the county. A lot of money was wasted that could have been used for recovery because the newcomers did not check in with the EOC and let them know what was going on.
- It was a challenge not having a long-term recovery organization.
- There was no depth in the ESF 15 which caused problems.
- Volunteer organizations need to take ICS training so they can communicate with the first responders and understand the paperwork.

Red Cross opened 2 shelters within one hour. Additionally, the Red Cross and Salvation Army set up feeding units. A Volunteer Reception Center was opened by the County.

The 'Heroes' set up a temporary VOAD in a church. They provided counseling services, staffed some PODS, managed donations, moved debris, fed the survivors, and provided reconstruction services. The EOC advised everyone through the media that the survivors needed cash donations, not old clothes. However, they were overwhelmed by donations. They put them in a building at the fairgrounds but the roof began to leak – the donations had to be put in a

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dumpster. One individual developed a mission to build picnic tables that were welcomed by those living in tents.

Jerry decided that the volunteers should be thought of as first responders – and it worked. They became unpaid county employees so they could get workers comp. They worked 7,000 hours in the 6 weeks of activation.

An individual camp was set up to house the volunteers separately from the ‘paid’ staff. This was one of the first all volunteer camps in the state. At least 16 of the 24 hours per day, a county employee should be there as a liaison with the EOC.

A number of the volunteers were from Arizona, Washington, etc. There was a huge cultural difference that had to be overcome between them and the groups impacted by the storms.

Tapestry Update

Chip Taylor noted that the contract with VisionLink has been executed and partial monies paid. We will soon be responding to their need for information regarding the configuration package. They are developing a coordinating committee for Tapestry that will consist of 10 or 12 people including himself, Pauline Tracy and Jon McKenzie. A representative from Emergency Management will be invited. The Red Cross, 2-1-1 and representatives from Manatee County will be included.

Long-Term Recovery Committee

Marion Sortore updated the group on the last Long-Term Recovery Committee meeting. There is a draft document under development. The last meeting included a discussion of the teams that need to be set up under an LTRC. Details will be brought back to the committee next month and then to the COAD once the plan is ready for review.

Strike Team Updates

Children and Families: The committee hasn’t met since the last COAD. Their next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday.

Elder Care: The committee will meet Wednesday and will include a discussion with Emergency Management regarding discharge planning.

Mental Health/Substance Abuse: They met on June 2nd with a representative from the Red Cross discussing the team’s role with the Red Cross and the MRC. The MRC has a database that includes approximately 500 licensed mental health professionals. They have sent

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3 contact letters over the last year with limited response. The committee is in the process of revising and updating their mission statement. Their next meeting is July 7 at 3:30.

Volunteers and Donations: There have been two VRC trainings recently, one in coordination with the Red Cross. Their next meeting is July 17 at 9:30.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Sarasota Community Organizations Active in Disasters will be held on August 11, 2008 at 3:30 p.m. in the Auditorium, Room 226, at the Health and Human Services Business Center offices, 2200 Ringling, Sarasota.