

Hurricane Wilma - October 19, 2005

After several days of waiting and watching Hurricane Wilma, I attended an EOC briefing on Wednesday, October 19th. The EOC was preparing to increase their activities in preparation for a full activation later in the week.

Based on this information, I felt it was best to begin our own preparations, and I raised our activation level to "Level 3" on Thursday, October 20. An e-mail was sent to all members, asking them to advise Cheri of their availability. Cheri also began making her own calls in order to secure enough volunteers for all our assignments.

The EOC went to a full "Level 1" activation on Friday, October 21 in preparation for Wilma. I was stationed at the EOC throughout the day. Phone calls also continued. Operations shut down at 5 PM.

After advising the Red Cross of the low number of volunteers we had at the time (6), we were given a "waiver" so we could use the folks who have not yet taken the Red Cross training classes. This helped increase our volunteer numbers a bit.

The EOC dropped back to "Level 2" on Saturday, as Wilma's progress continued to be monitored. I spend an hour or so at the Red Cross, programming the "jump kit" radios with the local frequencies we would be using. In case they were needed, they would be available for use. Continued slow progress in getting volunteers to help, resulted in a third day of phone calls. Later Saturday, it was determined that PSN and Red Cross shelters would be opening at 9 AM Sunday, October 23. Another round of phone calls began, letting those who had volunteered, know where and when they would be assigned.

The EOC went back to "Level 1" activation at 8 AM Sunday. The EOC had operators on duty at 7:30 AM, Red Cross HQ came on shortly afterwards, and most Shelters would start coming on-line at 9 AM.

Shortly after arriving at the EOC, it was determined that the TSAR Teams would deploy at Midnight on Sunday. After talking with Cheri, I found out we would be short operators on at least 2 TSAR teams, but she would continue to find additional operators. I advised the TSAR Liaison at the EOC, that we may be short a couple operators.

After an uneventful day, some of the Shelter operators changed shifts at 10 PM, while 2 TSAR operators checked in when they arrived at their staging areas around midnight (never heard from any others).

Since there are no windows at the EOC, several early morning trips were made down the elevator, to check the weather (and watch the live TV broadcasts from the parking lot) as Wilma approached.

TSAR Team #3 (Doctors Hospital) decided to deploy Sunday morning, and several damage reports were called in and relayed into the EOC. As far as I know, no other TSAR teams were deployed.

The EOC gave the order to shut down the shelters at 1 PM on Monday, and those operators who remained, were released to go home.

By the way, we picked up 4 new ACS members between Friday and Sunday ... and all 4 of them were given immediate assignments.

This is a partial list of folks who were active. If I missed you, let me know.

Cheri Luehr - 4 DAYS ON THE PHONE!
Glenn, KL7HX - Red Cross (new ACS member)
Mark, KE4KMD - TSAR #3
Dennis, KI4DLD - TSAR #6
Roxi, W1ROX - Tuttle
Tom, N4XJQ - TSAR #6
Pat, KI4ICZ - Cranberry PSN
Dave, K9DAV - Brookside
Michelle, N9MYU - Red Cross
Al, KF4JIL - North Port HS
Jim, WA2MZF - Pineview (new ACS member)
Jessica, N2TVK - Pineview (new ACS member)
Bob, K9SRQ - Oak Park PSN
Burt, KI4FH - Oak Park PSN
Blake, KE4SGK - ? (new ACS member)
Jon, W4PDV - Brookside (SERC)
Ted, KI4HOK - EOC (on call for work)
Ron, WD4AHZ - EOC

Approximate man-hours for this event is 279. (Depending on who I missed or who didn't send me their hours worked).

Things didn't go as smoothly as we had hoped ... most notably, Cheri having to spend 4 days on the phone looking for enough volunteers to help. Another problem was stations not checking in when they arrived at their assignments. When asked if they were covered, "I don't know" was the answer.

Thanks to those who did "step up" to help.

Ron, WD4AHZ
EC, Sarasota County