

Tropical Storm Fay - August 18-19, 2008

Like everyone, we had been keeping an eye on Tropical Storm Fay, to see where she would go. Looking at the predicted path at every update, it was obvious that Sarasota would be impacted. As Emergency Management activities began to ramp up, we raised our "Activation Level" to 3 and used part of the weekend to find out who would be available.

An EOC Team Leader meeting was scheduled for Monday morning, August 18. Bob, K9SRQ, and I attended that meeting. We received a briefing of the current situation and the plans for the EOC to go to a "Full Scale" activation later in the day. We learned that 2 Special Needs and 3 General Population shelters would be opened after school let out for the day. EM asked us to staff the 2 Special Needs shelters.

After the meeting, several of the Team Leaders got a quick course (or refresher) on how to use EISMAX. This is a program used to send work orders and requests to the various ESF (Emergency Support Function) positions in the EOC. After the class, I did a check of the radio room, making sure everything was ready and working for our activities. Once checked out, I returned home to prepare things around the house and pack up a few things for the deployment. I checked my e-mail, and had a note from the Red Cross that Jim, WA2MZF, had volunteered to help through them.

Once I returned to the EOC, I had a request from the Red Cross to staff their 3 shelters. When I got everything up and running, I checked with Dave, K9DAV, and we started working on assigning folks to the 5 shelters. A few folks dropped out, but after a couple phone calls, we had everything covered. One jump kit was requested at one of our south county shelters, so we coordinated with the Red Cross to send that down with them ... as they were preparing to send supplies to the same location. We sent an extra jump kit along, in case it was needed later.

Throughout the evening, folks began arriving at their assignments, set up equipment, and became operational. I decided to get in a little practice, so I used the EISMAX system to advise the Red Cross and the Health Department of our shelter operator status.

Since there wasn't much traffic on the radios during the overnight and morning hours, I decided to fire up Echolink and logged onto the VoIP SKYWARN/Hurricane Net to monitor what was going on. They were looking for weather reports from the affected area, so I checked the weather data being displayed in the EOC, and passed that information each hour until they shut down the net around 8 AM Tuesday morning.

About the same time, Congressman Vern Buchanan arrived for a tour of the EOC and to get an update of the activities. He got a view of our radio room, and we showed him one of our portable radio jump kits.

Around 9 AM I got word that we could shut down operations and release our operators. Because

of the change in Fay's track, it turned out, that the effects of Fay in Sarasota County were minimal. However, these types of activations are always good "practice" to find out what works and what needs to be fixed for next time.

For the most part, things went well. We are still extremely shorthanded when it comes to having enough help (with many of our active northern members out of town this time of year), and would have difficulty if we're required to staff more locations in the future. Again, any help with recruiting more members, would be most welcome. We had some equipment mix-ups and could have put the extra jump kit to use, and had a few minor computer glitches in the radio room (don't know if it was Internet or Firewall issues). But even with the minor problems, we fulfilled our tasks and had folks where we were asked to have them - even if there wasn't much for us to do (this time).

Thanks to Tom, K4TAP, and the Sarasota Emergency Radio Club, for the use of their repeaters.

Thanks to these individuals for their assistance.

Dave, K9DAV
Cheri Luehr
Al, KI4YEH
Blake, KE4SGK
Mark, KE4KMD
Al, N8NZ
Jim, WA2MZF
Jessica, N2TVK
Doug, KI4RHU
Bob, K9SRQ
Ron, WD4AHZ

96 man-hours were contributed to this event.

Ron Wetjen, WD4AHZ
Emergency Coordinator, Sarasota County