

2014 Emergency Management Annual Report

Cowley County Emergency Management's third annual report is now available. This report will highlight activities, accomplishments and an overall review of the Emergency Management program.



COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STAFF

Brian Stone, CEM®, KCEM – Director

Principle advisor to the County Administrator and the Board of County Commissioners on emergency management issues and operations; directs all activities of the department, including all planning. Brian has served Cowley County for a total of 25 years with the last 12 in his current position.

John Stradal, KCEM - Assistant Coordinator

Responsible for the county-wide exercise program, outdoor warning sirens and communications for the agency. Assists in all planning efforts to include special events and day to day activities. John has served Cowley County for 4 years, all in his current position.

Jolan Csukas - Volunteer Coordinator

Responsible for the recruitment, activities and sustainability of all four volunteer programs: CCEA, CERT, CART and MRC. Jolan has served Cowley County for a total of 5 years with the last 2 in her current position.

Lynn Nichols – Administrative Assistant

Responsible for maintaining day to day activities in the office including answering phones, working with volunteer groups, dealing with governmental entities, processing and documenting all expenditures and grant tracking. Lynn has served Cowley County for a total of 14 years with the last 8 in her current position.

Staff Accomplishments:

Brian Stone completed his term on the Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA) Board after serving for six years. He now serves the Board as the Awards Committee Chairperson. Along with Teri Smith of Douglas County, Brian was a co-presenter of two classes at the Annual KEMA Conference titled, “EM 101 for New Emergency Managers”.

John Stradal was named the Emergency Management Professional of the Year by his peers during the 2014 Annual KEMA Conference held in Junction City, KS in September. This prestigious award is given to the EM Professional who has been a leader for a number of years, exemplifies the ideals of professional public service, has high principles of community preparedness, meets the professional certification requirements, and has a personal dedication to the safety of the citizens of their jurisdiction. John was selected for the award based on his hard work and dedication toward the revitalization of the RACES program, the numerous Amateur Radio classes being taught, the successful update of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Project, the continued technical work on the radio/console system for the new EOC/PSAP and many more.



John continues to serve as the re-certification officer for the Kansas Certified Emergency Manager (KCEM) Program for Kansas Emergency Management Association.

Jolan Csukas was honored to be a presenter of two separate sessions at the 2014 Kansas Preparedness Summit held in Topeka. She was a presenter for a course titled, “Volunteer Engagement and Recruitment” and “Neighborhood Preparedness”.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEER GROUPS

When emergencies occur or disasters strike, volunteers are a welcome sight for EM Staff and a vital resource for all agencies. Volunteers are a crucial part of the Emergency Management program as they are willing to endure the worst conditions to help out when needed. Volunteers give of their time and effort without expecting anything in return. EM volunteers performed 2,676 hours of work in support of training, outreach and response to events in 2014.

COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY AUXILIARY (CCEA)

The Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary is a volunteer based group that acts under the direction of Cowley County Emergency Management in Cowley County, Kansas. The group dates back to August 8th 1985. Prior to this time the Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary was known as the Cowley County Civil Defense. The CCEA's primary role at this time is to provide trained storm spotters for Cowley County. This elite group of volunteers donate their valuable time and provide a commitment to ensure the safety of Cowley County residents through early warnings. The group also works closely with other public safety agencies within the county. The group averages 900 volunteer hours to this community per year. The Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary continues to be a big part of this community by working with the public in weather and personal safety.



Jeff Soukup – CCEA President

Jeff oversees the daily operations of the CCEA program, which include monthly meetings, training, and program expenditures. He assumes an EOC response role as needed to assist during severe weather. Jeff is employed full time by the Kansas Dept. of Corrections at the Winfield Correctional Facility.



Long time Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary Member, Allen Fuller, receives an appreciation plaque during the Volunteer Christmas Social held on December 9, 2014.

Allen retired from the group after 19 years of service (April 25, 1995 – October 9, 2014).

We will miss his services, but we know that he has a front porch and a cell phone.



COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)

By joining CERT, people from all walks of life have teamed together to volunteer in emergency situations. The initial training provides basic life skills so they can help themselves, their family, and neighbors in case of a disaster. Further training is readily available to enhance these skills and broaden understanding of how to prepare for various disasters. The goal for CERT this year was to improve the levels of training in order to be better prepared for assignments to assist local first responders. The membership voted to create a Training Facilitator position for this purpose. Steve Williams, who has a background as a volunteer firefighter, accepted this responsibility. He provides monthly trainings and will take an active role in designing training exercises. As we see more and more disasters throughout the world, both natural and manmade, we acknowledge the importance of knowing what to do if such a disaster should occur locally. Members are aware that deployment for major disasters may happen when local emergency services personnel are unable to get to everyone affected. CERT members will act as a team, under direction of emergency services, to do the most good for the most disaster victims possible. CERT members also assist with local community functions by providing traffic control, conduct safety fairs, and present emergency preparedness programs throughout the county. Monthly meetings are held to keep members aware of upcoming events and for ongoing training.



Cheryl Underwood – CERT President

Cheryl joined CERT in 2009. She and her husband, Orlan, have been aware of and actively working to be prepared for emergencies and wanted to do more for local preparedness and sharing information that could help others. Cheryl is retired from a teaching career and is now a substitute teacher and is part of a Testing Team that does Progress Monitoring in elementary schools three times a year.



COWLEY COUNTY MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS (MRC)

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is a community-based network of medical volunteers that assists public health efforts in times of special need or disaster, e.g. during a major communicable disease outbreak, an earthquake, flood, or an act of terrorism. Members of an MRC may also volunteer their time throughout the year in order to promote community public health and education. Further, Cowley County MRC volunteers can provide relief for overworked workers in the event of an emergency. MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals, such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians, and epidemiologists.



David Brazil – MRC Advisory Board Member

David is the Public Health Administrator and Public Health Officer for the City-Cowley County Health Department. David is a Registered Environmental Health Specialist. Day to day operations of the MRC fall under the direction of the City-County Health Department.



Jason Kazban – MRC Coordinator

Jason is the City-Cowley County Health Department's Public Health Emergency Response Program Coordinator. He is a retired Master Sergeant from the US Air Force and has an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice and working toward a Bachelor's Degree in Homeland Security and Emergency Management. He is a certified Kansas Emergency Manager through the Kansas Emergency Management Association.



COWLEY COUNTY ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM (CART)

Time after time, during natural disasters, we hear reports of people refusing to leave their homes when advised to do so because they will not leave their pets behind. As a result, states, and then counties, began to form animal response teams (SART and CART). The goal is to: identify shelters that will accept owners and their pets; arrange flexible visiting schedules if pets and owners cannot shelter together; and provide transportation and shelter for large animals.



Dr. Bill McKinley, DVM – CART President

Bill is a veterinarian who lives and works in Cedar Vale and has been serving the Cowley County and Chautauqua County area for 20 years. He is the first President of the newly-formed CART program.



Melissa Shaw, KCEM, MEP – CART Vice-President

Melissa is the Public Health Emergency Preparedness/Training & Exercise Coordinator for the Butler County Health Dept. She resides in Winfield and volunteers her time in Cowley County.



COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY RESPONSE VOLUNTEERS, INC (CCERV)

In January, the Cowley County Emergency Response Volunteers (CCERV, Inc.) held its first official meeting as a non-profit group. Two representatives from each emergency response group – Auxiliary, CERT, CART and MRC – plus one community member, met to officially elect officers, adopt the by-laws and vote on their affiliation with The Legacy Foundation. Through CCERV, Inc., the volunteer groups can combine their efforts for training, sponsoring events, and raising funds for equipment and supplies.

Orlan Underwood – CCERV President

Orlan has been a CERT member since 2009. He retired from 38 years of teaching for the Cowley Co Special Education Services but now works as a para-educator for the Winfield Intermediate School. He is an active community member and also serves in numerous capacities in his church, including being the emergency preparedness and emergency response communications specialist. He has been an active CERT member since 2009.



CCERV, INC. – THE LEGACY FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIP A GOOD MATCH

The newly formed non-profit CCERV, Inc. for Emergency Management volunteers was off to a good start in 2014.

One of the first fruits of their labor was a grant totaling \$2,532.00 from the Kansas Pipeline Association. These funds were used to purchase additional radios, eight anemometers and safety vests for Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary (storm spotters) and County Emergency Response Team (CERT).

When presenting the award to CCERV, Inc., Michael Potvin, KPA president, issued this statement: “The Kansas Pipeline Association (KPA) is a non-profit organization consisting of more than 45 pipeline operators in the state. Our organization introduces emergency responders and public officials to the basics of pipeline recognition and encourages everyone to use the state one-call underground damage prevention program. KPA also focuses on providing Kansas emergency responders with the information they need to protect our nation’s critical assets and ensure the safety of the communities they serve. It is in this effort that the Kansas Pipeline Association is pleased to partner with Cowley County Emergency Management personnel and help fund the purchase of much needed equipment. It is also an honor to be able to give back to the same communities in which our employees also live and work.”



Jessica Jackson, KPA board member; Jeff Soukup, Auxiliary President; Cheryl Underwood, CERT President; and Brian Cunningham, CERT Vice President and Communications Officer and Auxiliary member, are shown with examples of the new equipment purchased through the recently awarded KPA grant. The Cowley County Emergency Management volunteer groups were able to purchase new radios, anemometers and safety vests to be used by their members.



In June, CERT and CART members sponsored the Dexter Fun Run. It was of benefit to the businesses contributing to the event to be able to make theirs a tax deductible donation.

In late December, The Legacy Foundation notified CCERV, Inc. of a \$490.00 donation by an anonymous donor to assist the group with equipment purchases. CCERV, Inc. will determine how they can best use this donation for the benefit of the emergency response volunteers.

Officers are President, Orlan Underwood, CERT; Vice President, Bill Mueller, Community Member/CART; Secretary-Treasurer, Cameron Groom, Auxiliary.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

2014 CERT Class

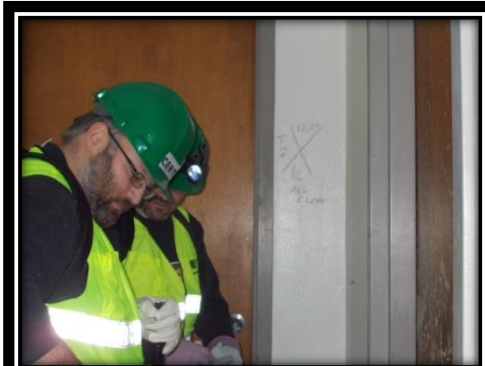
On Tuesday, Jan. 21, 16 people gathered in the Assembly Room of the Physician's Pavilion at noon to begin 24 hours of intense training to become the newest members of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Over a period of four weeks, they met twice a week for three hours to learn about disaster medical operations, preparedness, psychology, fire safety, search and rescue operations, terrorism, and communications. At the end of the classes, the group put their newly learned skills to the test by participating in a mock disaster exercise in the old Ark City hospital. Those successfully completing all requirements were given a certificate and official CERT response equipment.

Anyone, regardless of age or medical condition, can enroll in a CERT training program. Anyone under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult to class and will not be allowed to actively engage in rescue operations until they turn 18. The CERT class participants usually have varied backgrounds. Members of the 2014 class included a nurse, a FEMA disaster responder, a couple of home schooled children, mothers, a former law enforcement officer and employees and first responders from General Electric.

In part, here's what two of the participants said about the training: "We really didn't know what to expect when we signed up for this program. However, we are very glad that we took advantage of the opportunity.....That final exercise still amazes me. It would have been easy for some to quickly pounce on rookie mistakes. However, the CERT instructors were able to take all of our blunders with an encouraging smile and let us discover them ourselves at the hot wash. Thanks to your preparation, it was a fun, powerful and positive learning experience."



CERT students learn many alternate ways of providing a safe carry for victims



CERT trainees practice using standard FEMA markings before and after entering a building. These markings are used to let all responders know when the building was checked, who/what was found and what further action might need to be taken.



Trainees put on safety vests and carefully check their backpack equipment before entering the building housing the disaster scenario.



Health and Safety Fair

The annual Health and Safety Fair was held at the Winfield Fairgrounds this year on April 5. All four volunteer groups set up information tables and answered questions about the responsibilities and requirements of each group. Ray German demonstrated how two of his emergency preparedness kits were assembled – one very basic and compact 72-hour survival bag and one much larger bag that allowed for more comfort items to be packed. Jason Kazban had an emergency medical supply kit, used by the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) on display. NOAA Severe Weather Radios were given away via drawing during the event.



Instead of offering the usual CERT Lite class to high school students this past spring, several students from Mrs. Hunter's Health class at WHS elected to come to the Health and Safety Fair to become familiar with the variety of organizations in Cowley County involved in health and safety matters. They also visited in depth with representatives from each of the CCEM volunteer groups.

Safety Day Camp

For the past two years, the Cowley County Extension office has sponsored a Safety day camp for elementary students at the Winfield Fairgrounds at the end of May. Approximately 60 campers ranging in ages 6-12 attended the event. Representatives from various groups – Highway Patrol, fire department, EMS – provide training on tractor safety, mowing, car safety, first aid, and more. Members of the CERT group spent the afternoon talking to the students about emergency preparedness and gave each participant an information packet to share with their families.

Community Presentations – Personal Emergency Preparedness

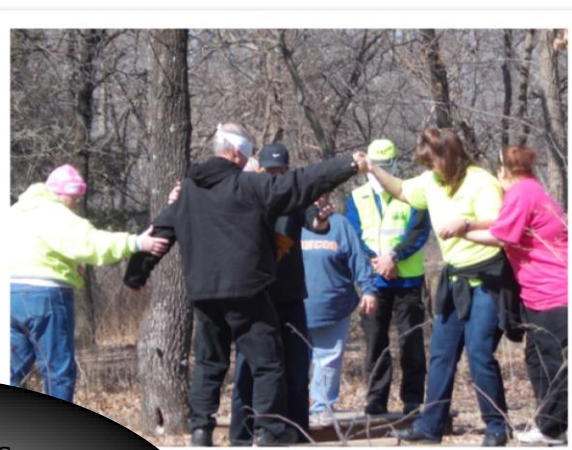
The theme for this year's community presentations was Personal Emergency Preparedness. During the month of September and the first half of October, staff and volunteers visited each of the towns in Cowley County. They talked about the different types of disasters that could occur in each community and home and explained steps that should be taken to prevent and/or to survive the event. They presented a list of information and supplies a family should always have "at the ready" and why they were important for faster recovery. In addition, NOAA severe weather radios were given to attendees who had not received one in the past. Plans for next year's presentations lean toward a more individual neighborhood approach. It has always been said that you first take care of yourself and your family, then your neighborhood and then your community. CCEM has presented the message of self and family, the neighborhood is the next goal.



Low Ropes

Very early on a cold but sunny day at the end of March, members of CART, CCEA and CERT, along with the Emergency Management staff, met at Camp Horizon to participate in the Low Ropes Challenge course, an activity geared toward team-building. Realizing that, if a major disaster were to hit the Cowley County area, all first responders' responsibilities would be intertwined, the groups felt this would be a beneficial activity for them. Getting to know each other, learning each person's capabilities, and building a bond of trust, is an important aspect when working together in stressful situations.

At the end of the morning, the group had lunch and discussed the lessons learned. All agreed they would like to make this an annual event and also all agreed they were not up to the High Ropes Challenge Course – other than as spectators!



TEAM BUILDING

TRUST

CAPABILITIES

RESPONSIBILITIES



Dexter Fun Run

The Dexter Fun Run on July 12th was the first joint effort fund raiser for the CERT and CART groups with some assistance from several CCEA members. When the groups found out the Auxiliary members were not going to be able to sponsor the run this year, they decided they wanted to keep the fund raising opportunity alive and do it themselves. With just a little over one month to pull it all together, the groups met, formed a plan and fanned out to get sponsors and participants for the event. In addition to the monies raised, the volunteers enjoyed the joint venture. Plans for a multi-level fun run and a possible obstacle course for pets are in the works for 2015.



Preparedness Summit

The annual Kansas Preparedness Summit was held in Topeka on July 25-26th. This two day conference is attended by CERT, CART, Red Cross, United Way, Salvation Army and a number of other first responders from around the state. The variety of topics discussed included earthquakes, disaster psychology, first aid, long term shelters, volunteer recruitment and retention, spontaneous volunteer management and neighborhood preparedness. Jolan Csukas, CCEM Volunteer Coordinator, presented information on volunteer recruitment and retention in two breakout sessions and lead discussion on neighborhood preparedness in another session. Volunteers from CCEM attending were: Cheryl and Orlan Underwood, Brian Cunningham, Crystal Merz, Carolyn Bergkamp, Steve Markley, Michelle Crane, Melissa Shaw and Heath Adams. The Summit gives first responders the opportunity to gain more information about their role during a disaster and to share ideas with other volunteers and organizational directors from around the state.



Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

The first annual Volunteer Appreciation dinner for all Cowley County Emergency Management volunteers was held at the Quail Valley Fun Barn on April 17. Among the guests were volunteers, staff, the County Administrator and a County Commissioner. Volunteers were each given a flashlight in appreciation for their service during the past year. Volunteers were recognized for their 2,073 hours of service in 2013.



Addressing the group during the volunteer appreciation dinner

Left: Wayne Wilt, Cowley County Commissioner and Right: Jeremy Willmoth, Cowley County Administrator

A volunteer is like a rare gem. When placed in the right setting and cared for, they will shine and give pleasure to all who see them.

--Unknown

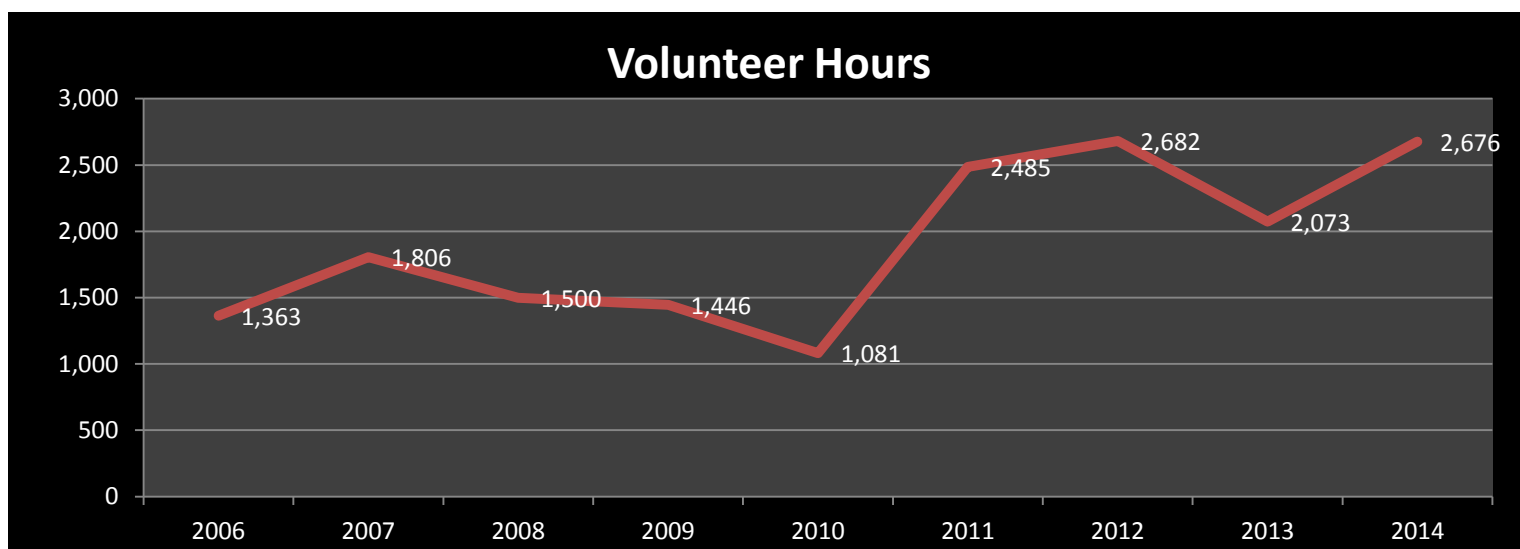
Community Education and Outreach Presentations

Emergency Management staff and volunteers stay active every month of the year. Staff members do presentations on a variety of subject to a diverse group of community members. Approximately 954 citizens benefited from programs including Severe Weather and Safety, Continuity of Operations, Personal Preparedness, School Preparedness, Emergency Management 101 and Business Continuity. CCEM volunteers are most often called upon by law enforcement, schools and organizations to assist with a variety of community activities. They also participate in continuing training programs and exercises to stay current on latest communication technology, safety and rescue methods. During 2014, Cowley County Emergency Management volunteers accumulated 2,676 hours to community activities and training.



| Volunteer Activity | | Presentations | |
|--|--|--|--|
| January | | | |
| *New CERT training class begins | | *Winfield Lion’s Club – EM Overview *Burden Sunflower Outreach – EM Overview | |
| February | | | |
| *SC Concert – assist with parking, traffic *Final exercise for 2014 CERT class *Fury on the Plains at Cowley Cinema | | *Atlanta Senior Citizens – EM Overview | |
| March | | | |
| *Low Ropes Exercise (CCEA, CERT, CART) *Amateur Radio Classes | | *Kiwanis Club – Severe Wx Presentation | |
| April | | | |
| *Health and Safety Fair *Symphony on the Prairie *Amateur Radio Classes | | *CERT Lite at Health and Safety Fair *Cowley College – Severe Wx *Whittier School 2 nd Grade – Severe Wx *GE – Severe Wx (3 shifts) *Cowley College – Business Continuity *Winfield Resthaven – Severe Wx *Lowell 2 nd -3 rd Grades – Severe Wx | |
| May | | | |
| *SC Graduation *Round Up for Summer *WHS Graduation *VA Memorial Day Ceremony *Safety Day Camp (Sponsored by Extension Office) | | *Atlanta Senior Citizens – Severe Wx *Farm Day – Personal Preparedness | |
| June | | | |
| *Dexter Fun Run Planning Sessions | | *Legacy Foundation – COOP TTX | |
| July | | | |
| *Dillon’s Safety Fun Event (CCEA) *Dexter Fun Run (CERT, CART, CCEA) | | *RR – Personal Preparedness *Ark City Chamber – Business Continuity *Cowley College – Business Continuity | |
| August | | | |
| *K&O Gas and Steam Engine Show *Block Party at Cornerstone Bible Church | | *DARE Camp – Severe Wx (3 presentations) | |
| September | | | |
| *WHS Homecoming Parade *Last Run Car Show | | Personal Preparedness – Dexter, Udall, Tisdale, Burden, Winfield and Atlanta | |
| October | | | |
| *SC Homecoming Parade *Arkalalah Parade | | *WNH Auxiliary – What is Emergency Management? *CCEM Volunteer Organizations – ESA *Personal Preparedness – Cambridge, Parkerfield and Arkansas City | |
| November | | | |
| *WHS CERT Lite Class *ABATE Toy Run – Winfield to Arkansas City | | *None | |
| December | | | |
| *Winfield Christmas Parade of Lights | | *None | |





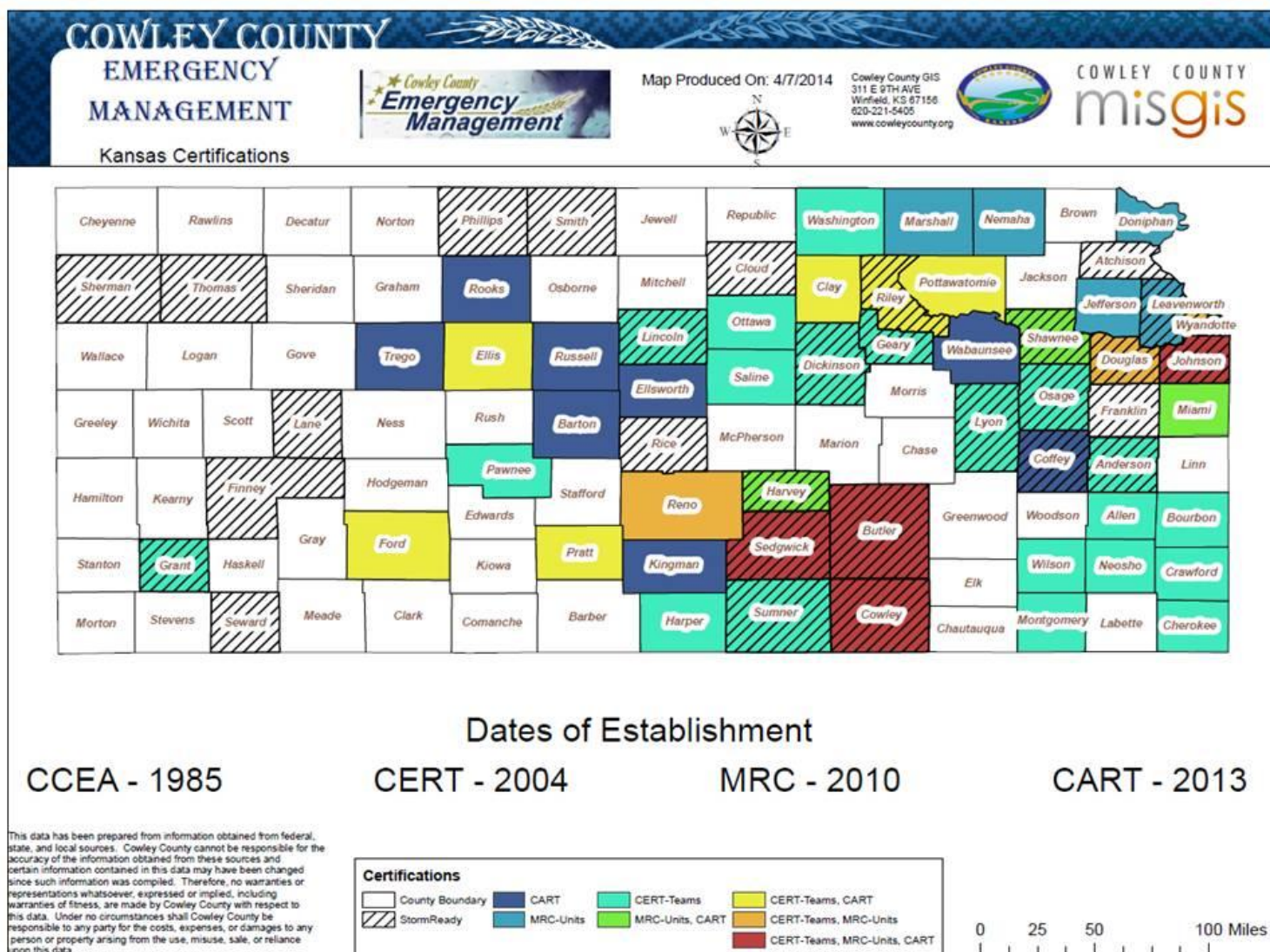
A common theme of CCEM, as noted in this annual report, is the importance and value of our volunteers. Over the course of the years, some move, some retire and others train to join one or more of the volunteer groups. Each group has its own major responsibility – spotting storms, rescuing people and animals, providing medical attention – and yet they also work together for the common good. They are involved in a number of training activities each year but also provide invaluable volunteer service in the Cowley communities. Many of their activities are managed without the presence of the EM staff.

When volunteers are called out to work events, track storms, respond to call-outs, assist in the EOC or attend trainings, they are also responsible for documenting their time on the job and the duties that were performed. They use the standardized ICS 214 form to do this. The form is then submitted to the Volunteer Coordinator and their hours are tracked by event per volunteer. Many are involved in the task but not so much in the paperwork and need “gentle” reminders that the hated 214 is also an important factor of CCEM operations.

Through the years, more organizations, agencies and event organizers have become aware of the volunteer groups and their abilities. Requests for event support continue to grow. The groups are familiar with those large annual events that have become community standards – Arkalalah, college and high school homecoming parades, car show, and ABATE toy run. Each year, requests come in from organizations that have come to recognize the advantage of our volunteer assistance. The annual calendar shows that volunteers assist with community events all 12 months of the year. Any group wanting/needing volunteer assistance is urged to go to our website at www.cowleycounty.org/em and complete the Volunteer Assistance Form a minimum of 30 days prior to a planned event.

Hours vary from year to year, depending upon scheduled community events and unscheduled events such as severe weather, search and rescue, a call for volunteers to assist other counties, etc. 2014 was, fortunately a rather uneventful year for weather and calls for mutual assistance and major disaster events but there was a major step up in requests for support in community events and additional valued training for volunteers.





Through research and curiosity, Cowley County decided to look at the Citizen Corps program statewide. Information provided to us from the State Citizen Corps program was provided to our County MIS/GIS Department to provide a visual aid.

The map above shows each county in the State of Kansas and gives comparisons of which counties have MRC, CART and CERT programs (with many having more than one). Cowley County is one of four counties in the state to have an MRC Unit, along with CART and CERT teams. Considering the population sizes of the counties with all programs, Cowley County has the smallest population.

Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) Table Top Exercise

Cowley County EM, in partnership with numerous local and regional partners conducted a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) exercise near the end of 2013. From that, Cowley County formed a local Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) in January of 2014. The group meets quarterly, but in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of a VOAD's role in a disaster, a tabletop exercise was created and presented with the scenario being a flooding event across Cowley County. VOAD members worked together with the American Red Cross, the United Way 211 and Emergency Management to work through the scenario.

VOAD members learned who would make the declaration and contact them for assistance; who would be in charge of shelters; what are the rules for food preparation; who would manage the volunteers; how would special needs be met, and many of the other services that would be needed at some point in time depending upon the size and scope of the event.

Special thanks go to Arlan and Wilma Anglemeyer of the Tisdale United Methodist Church. They were our gracious hosts and also the newest long term recovery shelter in Cowley County. The ARC conducted their site survey following the exercise.

Drive-Thru Flu Clinic

Cowley County CERT, Auxiliary volunteers, and Emergency Management staff participated in the City-Cowley County Health Department annual Drive-Thru Flu Clinic on October 10th. The flu clinic, held at the Twin Rivers Developmental Supports building at Strother Field gives the recipients a quick and easy way to be immunized, and allow volunteers and staff the opportunity to practice skills that would be utilized should mass prophylaxis be required.

All-Hazards Weather Radio Grant

In 2013, CCEM was able to purchase a total of 400 NOAA All-Hazard Weather radios through a mitigation grant from FEMA and donations from area businesses. A total of 212 radios were given to Cowley citizens over the course of the year at severe weather preparedness presentations in all of the communities in the county. Special emphasis was given to those in rural areas outside the reach of severe weather sirens.

During 2014, approximately 120 radios were handed out at community presentations based on the theme of personal emergency planning and preparedness. Many citizens attending these county wide presentations had already received an all-hazard radio at the prior event and were not eligible to receive another. Most of the remaining radios will be placed in schools and city buildings where large groups gather on a regular basis.



COMMUNICATIONS

Amateur Radio Class

Cowley County Emergency Management, in cooperation with the Cowley County Amateur Radio Club, once again held Technician Level Amateur Radio classes in 2014. Amateur Radio is a form of two-way radio communication where licensed operators may communicate with other Amateur Radio operators both locally and around the world. Amateur Radio operators are often able to still communicate when other means fail, and have been valuable assets during many recent large-scale disasters. Due to increased demand, two classes were offered this year. The first was held in March, and resulted in 15 new operators. The second was held in April, and 11 new operators received their first licenses. Through classes held since 2011, the total number of new operators in Cowley County is now 52.

Field Day

Every year around the country during the last weekend in June, Amateur Radio operators, or Hams, participate in an event known as field day. The purpose of this event is to test the emergency communications capability of local Hams, usually from a location with no existing equipment. In 2014, the Cowley County Amateur Radio Club worked together with Cowley County Emergency Management to participate in the event. The group set up and operated from the Winfield Fairgrounds using the Cowley County Mobile Command trailer for shelter and generator power. Despite the rainy weather, the event was considered a success, as the group was able to contact other participants nationwide, and learned a few valuable lessons along the way.



RACES

The year 2014 marked the official charter of a new volunteer program for Cowley County. In an effort to increase the County's ability to communicate in an emergency, a Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) Group was formed. RACES members use Amateur Radio to provide communications links to critical facilities when needed in a disaster, and can also provide additional communications when existing public safety infrastructure is overwhelmed or unavailable. Amateur Radio operators are still able to communicate when other means fail, since they can create their own infrastructure, and operate without having to depend on any existing communications systems. The local RACES group was officially started on July 28th with the appointment of Randy Storey as RACES Officer for Cowley County. Randy and the Emergency Management staff are currently working on plans and procedures for the new group over the winter months, and plan to begin actively recruiting members in the spring. According to state records, Cowley County is currently one of only 9 counties in the State of Kansas to have a RACES program.



Storm Fury on the Plains

The annual storm spotter training was held again at the Cowley Cinema 8 Theater near Strother Field on Tuesday, February 25, 2014. This year's event was different in that we were able to host two separate presentations with a short break between them. Our first presentation was held at 3:00pm and brought out 93 participants. The evening presentation was at 6:30pm and there were 111 participants in attendance. There were a total of 20 NOAA All-Hazards weather radios given away to Cowley County residents.

Severe Weather

Cowley County EM, by use of the Emergency Operations Center, coordinates severe weather response activities. The EOC is the hub for all spotters, fire and law personnel to submit reports. Outdoor Warning Sirens are sounded from the EOC and situational awareness during severe weather is a top priority for the citizens.

For 2014, the EOC was activated 8 times for severe weather. Cowley County was placed under 6 Severe Thunderstorm Watches and a total of 17 Severe Thunderstorm Warnings. 1 Tornado Watch and 2 Tornado Warnings were issued. 1 Tornado was reported 3 miles south and 1 ½ miles east of Dexter near the US 166/K-15 West Junction. There were 9 reports of severe hail (1" or larger) and 1 report of severe wind (58+mph).

The storm starts, when the drops start dropping; when the drops stop dropping then the storm starts stopping. ~ Dr. Seuss



WEATHER PHOTOS



Supercell in eastern Cowley County - April 2
Photo taken by Brian Cunningham



Large hail near Atlanta - April 13
Photo taken by Austin Williams



Large hail in Pleasant Valley - Sept 1
Photo taken by Brandi Bonesteel



Supercell in eastern Cowley County - April 2
Photo taken by Steve Tredway



Wall Cloud NW of Ark City - Sept 1
Photo taken by Zach Legleiter



Lightning over Cowley County - June 12
Photo taken by Steve Tredway

PREPAREDNESS

StormReady®

Emergency Management is proud to call Cowley County a StormReady® County. In 2014, the National Weather Service Office presented Cowley County with a three-year renewal of the StormReady® certification. Cowley County achieved this designation in 1999 and has maintained that certification ever since. Chance Hayes, Warning

Coordination Meteorologist was joined by Suzanne Fortin, Meteorologist in Charge and Vanessa Pearce, Meteorologist from the National Weather Service Office in Wichita to do the presentation on September 23, 2014.



To remain a StormReady® community, Cowley County must adhere to the following guidelines:

- 1) Communication: establish a 24-hour warning point (WPD) and establish an EOC;
- 2) NWS Information Reception: have 4 separate ways for the EOC/WP to receive NWS alerts;
- 3) Hydrometeorological Monitoring: have 3 separate ways to receive hydrometeorological data
- 4) Community Preparedness: have a minimum of 3 weather safety talks annually, train spotters and dispatchers biennially, and host an annual NWS spotter training; and
- 5) Administrative: have a formal hazardous weather operations plan, biennial visits by the Emergency Manager to the NWS, and an annual visit by NWS official to the community.

As of the end of 2014, Kansas has 43 StormReady® designations, with 30 of those being Counties.

Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador

As a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador, Cowley County serves in a role in affecting societal change by helping build a nation that is ready, responsive, and resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and water events. As an Ambassador, we are committed to the following:

- 1) Promoting Weather-Ready Nation messages;
- 2) Engaging with NOAA personnel on potential collaboration opportunities;
- 3) Sharing our success stories of preparedness; and
- 4) Serving as an example by educating employees on workplace preparedness.

Cowley County was the first County in the South Central Region (and the 26-County Wichita Forecast Area) to become a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador.



PLANS

Cowley County Emergency Operations Plan

Per K.S.A. 48-929, the Cowley County Emergency Operations Plan must be updated and approved by the Kansas Division of Emergency Management every five years. The newest version was approved by KDEM on December 20, 2013 and was then officially promulgated by the Cowley County Commissioners on March 11, 2014. The public version of the plan can be found on the Cowley County website at: www.cowleycounty.org/em.

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

Governmental entities are at risk and susceptible to hazards the same as individuals and private companies. However, citizens rely on governmental services to aid in the response and restoration for those affected by an emergency or disaster. Cowley County has been actively working on department COOP plans. These plans help each agency identify their Critical Teams, Contacts, Mission Essential Functions, Alternate Facilities, and Resources just to name a few. The primary goal of a COOP plan is for an agency to continue serving the citizens as expected during an emergency or disaster with minimal disruption.

Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

Beginning in March of 2013, Cowley County began a large 21 month planning project. Every five years, Cowley County updates its Hazard Mitigation Plan. The purpose of this plan is to identify and rank the hazards that are likely to affect the county, and determine possible ways to mitigate the effects of these hazards. Completing this plan helps to focus mitigation efforts, and is also a prerequisite for some grant funding sources.

During this revision cycle, a new regional approach was taken, since many counties within South Central Kansas are likely to face the same hazards. A total of 11 counties participated in the plan, including Butler County, Cowley County, Harper County, Harvey County, Kingman County, Marion County, McPherson County, Reno County, Rice County, Sedgwick County and Sumner County. Within each of these counties multiple jurisdictions provided input, including city and county governments, townships, and school districts. A total of 42 jurisdictions provided input for Cowley County's portion of the plan. The last contributing jurisdiction in Cowley County formally adopted the completed plan in December of 2014. The Hazard Mitigation Plan is scheduled to be updated again in 2019.

Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan

Cowley County, as with all Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) – based counties, worked to complete a multi-year training and exercise plan (during a Training and Exercise Planning Workshop) following the LEPC meeting in December. Entities and jurisdictions from all areas of Cowley County come together and develop a three year plan for training and exercising. Each entity has specific “requirements” for training and exercising. This concept pulls all entities together and works on a collective plan to suit the needs of all participants. This is the third year Cowley County has completed this plan, which is reviewed mid-year.



South Central Kansas 19-County Commodity Flow Survey

The Cowley County LEPC applied for, and received a Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grant from the US Department of Transportation (administered by the Kansas Division of Emergency Management) to be the lead agency in conducting a 19-County Hazardous Materials Commodity Flow Survey.

The survey was completed in November and provided all planners and local responders in the South Central Region with information regarding the transportation of hazardous materials. While there is no specific pattern for transportation of hazardous materials, this will give a snapshot of the types and quantities being transported via air, rail, pipeline and highway. This is the second regional project that the Cowley County LEPC has been the lead agency on in the past three years. The Cowley County LEPC believes in being proactive in the planning process and our planning can only being enhanced when we included our regional partners.

While many hazardous materials pass through Cowley County in a variety of methods, there are two that we see on a regular basis:



Anhydrous Ammonia



Flammable Liquids – Petroleum Crude Oil

While both of these chemicals are prevalent in the area and travel the entire region via rail, road and pipeline, they are also necessities for our communities. These chemicals, plus numerous others not listed should be treated with respect. First responders in Cowley County training includes safe ways to properly mitigate and respond to incident involving any hazardous material.



Social Media in Emergency Management

Cowley County Emergency Management began using social media tools, specifically Facebook and Twitter, in early 2012. 2013 brought out the first YouTube video. The intention is to reach out and interact with the public before, during and after emergencies or disasters. As of the end of 2014, we have 1,701 Facebook “likes” and 294 Twitter “followers”. While that may seem like low numbers, the social media world allows all of those users to share and repost our information, which in turn reaches a much larger number of viewers. We share photos, tips, stories, and much, much more. We encourage our citizens to interact with us and provide us with information and feedback. Please be aware that social media outlets are not intended to replace 911 and if anyone has an emergency that requires immediate assistance, please call 911 and do not use social media. We hope to stay connected with our citizens and provide accurate information in a timely, reliable manner. The Cowley County website is a valuable place to see updated information such as weather situations reports, bridge work, road closings, weekly preparedness tips and special days.

Cowley County Emergency Management

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