

Cowley County
**Emergency
Management**

COWLEY
COUNTY
EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

2018 ANNUAL
REPORT



The vision of Emergency Management is that Cowley County, Kansas will be a community of cities and citizens who are disaster aware and disaster prepared.

Emergency Management Staff

Brian Stone, CEM®, KCEM **John Stradal, KCEM**
 Director Assistant Coordinator

Jason Kazban, KCEM, MEP **Taylor Dory, KCEM**
 EM Specialist Volunteer Coordinator

Cowley Co. Emergency Auxiliary (CCEA)

Cameron Groom **Adam Bauler**
 President Vice-President

Crystal Merz
 Secretary-Treasurer

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Martin Moon **Loretta Klamik**
 President Vice-President

Glenda Schmidt **Ron Upton**
 Treasurer Communications Officer

Crystal Merz **Steve Williams**
 Secretary Training Coordinator

Animal Response Team (CART)

Michelle Crane **Bill Mueller**
 President Vice-President

Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES)

Randy Storey **Ron Upton**
 RACES Officer Deputy RACES Officer

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Cowley County Emergency Management's Mission is:

To save lives, protect property and reduce the impacts of disasters through the mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery phases of Emergency Management.

Staff Accomplishments and Highlights

Brian Stone, CEM®, KCEM - Director

Brian had the privilege of being a part of group to lead a discussion to approximately 200 municipal employees at the League of Kansas Municipalities conference in Topeka. The topic of the presentation covered preparedness at all levels, including Local, State and Federal. Brian was honored to present alongside Angee Morgan, Deputy Director of Kansas Emergency Management and Paul Taylor, Director of FEMA Region 7.

Brian was selected by the Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA) Board of Directors to represent the organization as a member of the Kansas Association of Counties (KAC) Board of Directors. He began those duties in November and will serve at least a two-year term.

John Stradal, KCEM - Assistant Coordinator

John continued his involvement with the Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA), by being elected as the Vice-President for the South Central KEMA Region.

In May, John graduated from FEMA's National Emergency Management Advanced Academy at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, MD. He completed the full curriculum of 160 hours that provided the strategic level training, education and the essential skills and tools for emergency management professionals to lead dynamic and resilient programs.

Jason Kazban, KCEM, MEP - EM Specialist

Jason, who performs duties as an Emergency Management Specialist, continues to serve on the Board of Directors for Leadership Cowley County (LCC). He is an instructor on the LCC curriculum committee as well. Jason is also a member of KAPIO (Kansas Association of Public Information Officers) and the local Cowley County PIO group.

Taylor Dory, KCEM - Volunteer Coordinator

Taylor has worked hard since he began his career with Emergency Management in early 2017. He successfully received his Kansas Certified Emergency Manager (KCEM) professional certification through the Kansas Emergency Management Association. The KCEM is a certificate only bestowed upon those who have met specific requirements including employment, experience and professional training and education.

Alone we can do little; together we can do so much ~ Helen Keller

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 their time and effort without expecting anything in return.

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. The group dates back to August 8th 1985. The CCEA's primary role at this time is to provide trained storm spotters for Cowley County. This elite group of volunteers donates their valuable time and provides a commitment to ensure the safety of Cowley County residents through early warnings and work closely with other public safety agencies within the county. The Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary continues to be a big part of the community by working with the public in weather and personal safety. This organization meets every 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm to discuss events and other opportunities that are available for this group. This group also meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm to have training to stay up to date on the most current information regarding weather and other types of training such as traffic control and damage assessment.

COWLEY COUNTY COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)



CERT training is available in Cowley County at least once a year for anyone interested in learning how they can make a difference in the lives of their family, their neighborhood, their community and beyond in case of a natural or manmade disaster. Our local CERT group is open to anyone who desires to receive such training, whether or not they choose to use the information gained to help themselves and family only, or are willing to be available for other volunteer opportunities. Monthly meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday at 6:00pm to discuss opportunities where members can help with local community functions such as traffic control, health and safety fairs, drive-through flu clinics, parade route safety, programs to enhance the public's understanding of emergency preparedness, and many others. These volunteer hours often free up local police and others who would be paid for their time. CERT members receive monthly training to enhance or refresh skills learned in the original CERT training. Our goals this next year are (1) to learn more about the other emergency response groups in order to coordinate efforts effectively in an emergency, and (2) to gain training that will make our team more useful to the local first responders, such as police and fire departments. We want everyone to know how to MAKE A KIT, MAKE A PLAN, BE PREPARED and STAY INFORMED.

COWLEY COUNTY ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM (CART)



During natural disasters, people have refused 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. CART meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 6:00pm along with the CERT group.

RADIO AMATEUR CIVIL EMERGENCY SERVICE (RACES)

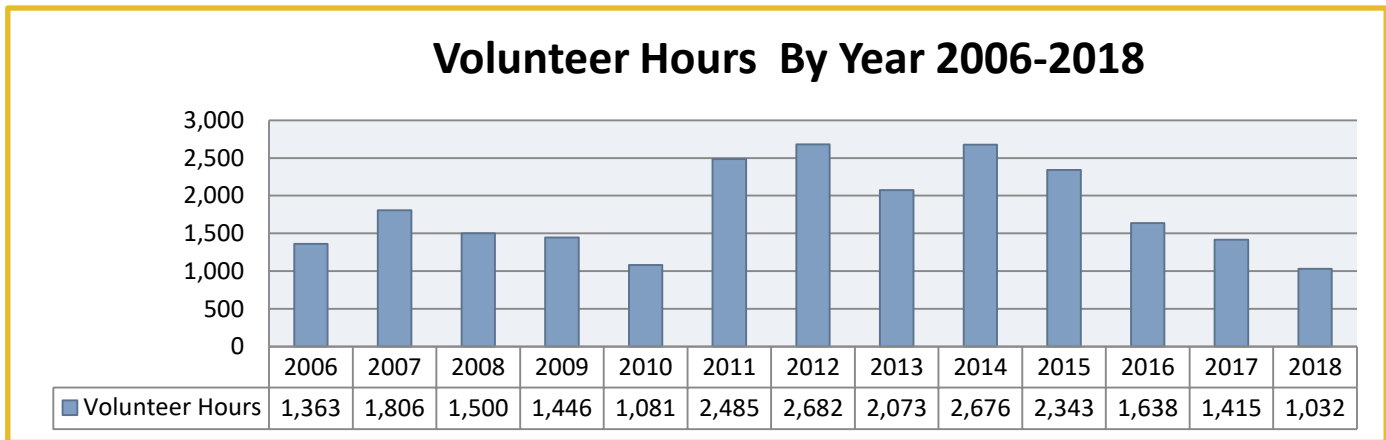


In an effort to increase the County’s ability to communicate in an emergency, the Cowley County Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) Group was formed in 2014. RACES members use Amateur Radio to provide communications links to critical facilities when needed in a disaster, and can also provide 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 can operate without having to depend on any existing communications systems. Since 2014, the RACES group has grown to 13

members, including 2 within the last year. RACES members continue to work with Emergency Management to enhance their skills and expand their capabilities. They participated in two large exercises in 2018, and were able to successfully test their existing capabilities as well as identify additional opportunities for development. Through their help, Cowley County continues to build a very robust backup communications network that will serve the county well in times of need. RACES meets the 4th Tuesday of every month at 6:30pm.

COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY RESPONSE VOLUNTEERS, INC (CCERV)

Cowley County Emergency Response Volunteer organizations came together in 2014 to form a 501(C)(3) nonprofit group. Participating emergency volunteer organizations include the Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary (CCEA), Cowley County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), and the Cowley County Animal Response Team (CART). In 2016 RACES was added to the group. CCERV is comprised of two representatives from each organization, plus an at large member to work together providing information and to jointly support the goals of each. Through the efforts of all volunteer organization, money has been raised for the purchase of communication equipment needed for training purposes and made available when these volunteers are deployed in an emergency situation. Communication is a vital part of emergency response and this equipment is crucial to our volunteers. We are grateful for the support from community organizations, businesses and individuals.



What volunteers bring is the human touch, the individual, caring approach that no government program, however well-meaning and well-executed, can deliver.

~ Edward James Olmos

Christmas Gathering

Volunteers from all Emergency Management volunteer groups and their guests attended the annual Christmas gathering at the EOC in lieu of their regular monthly meeting on December 11th. EM staff members provided meat, soups and drinks. Volunteers brought a sampling of their favorite finger foods and desserts to round out the menu. The groups use this time to visit with each other and share ideas for events in the year to come.

Cowley County Meet and Greet

Cowley County Emergency Management hosted the Meet and Greet for all county departments and special guests on December 5 from 9am-4pm. Staff members provided a variety of cookies and drinks for those visiting the office. To create a festive holiday spirit, a winter fireplace was projected on one screen and falling snow into a creek covered by a stone arch bridge was projected on another while holiday songs played in the background.

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

On April 10, during Volunteer Appreciation Month, CCEM hosted a dinner to honor its volunteers and to recognize their 1,032 hours of volunteer service to the county during the previous year. The event was catered by Greg and Kristi Powers of Naughty Nurses BBQ. The Powers are also part of a nationwide disaster relief organization called Operation BBQ Relief. The guest speakers for that evening were Kelly Benton, Unit Coordinator for the Kansas State Animal Response Team and Dana Steffee, Training Manager for the South Central Animal Response Team. Both emphasized the necessity of trained, passionate volunteers to assist during a coordinated response involving animals and pets. A special thanks goes to Cheryl and Orlan Underwood and Crystal Merz for their ideas and creativity with the decorations.



Kelly Benton visits with the volunteers during their appreciation dinner.

Fund Raisers

For the sixth year in a row, CCEA, CERT, CART and RACES volunteers spearheaded the Fun Run at Dexter's annual BBQ on July 14. All participants who pre-registered for the event were given a t-shirt and a finisher's medal. First, second and third place medals were given to runners in the men's and women's divisions. Local law enforcement officers from the Cowley County Sheriff's Department, Winfield Police Department and the Arkansas City Police Department (along with some other energetic citizens) provided a bicycle patrol, the City-Cowley County Health Department manned the hydration station and the Winfield Fire/EMS Reserves provided medical services to the event. The sound system and the emcee were courtesy of the Dexter Outreach Center Church. There was a drawing at the end of the race for prizes generously donated by businesses in Cowley County.

The event may not seem like something Emergency Management Volunteers would do, but there are some benefits. The groups get to be a part of a small town festival, practice their Incident Command System (ICS) skills, test out the communications plan of the newly-formed RACES team and lastly, earn some funds to support themselves.

For the 2017 race, there were 37 that participated. For 2018, there were 99 registered participants making this the largest turnout for the event since the inception. Our race drew most participants from Kansas and Oklahoma, but we also had some from the states of Ohio and Idaho.



Community Outreach and Education

CERT Lite

For the past few years, Lynne Hunter, Winfield High School teacher, has encouraged the students in her Health Class to participate in a CERT Lite (named so because its curriculum is geared toward teens) class. This fall, twelve students attended the three hour session in the Emergency Operations Center. Taylor Dory, Volunteer Coordinator, discussed the roles of all of the CCEM volunteer groups and outlined the training requirements for each group; he also discussed the importance of 911. Cameron Groom, Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary officer, defined the difference between a storm spotter and a storm chaser. He showed students the equipment in the storm center and explained the functions each person performs during the course of a disaster. Students were also shown, via PowerPoint, the various cloud formations that can eventually become a major storm in the area. Mark Moon, Cowley County CERT officer discussed the different courses within the CERT training that we do annually.

Health and Safety Fair

The annual Cowley County Health and Safety Fair was held in the Auxiliary Gym at the Winfield High School on April 14 from 9am to noon. All volunteer groups, with assistance from the Emergency Management staff, set up information tables and answered questions about the responsibilities and requirements of their respective groups. This was a great opportunity for several of our new volunteers to be involved and take an active role.



EM Volunteer groups at the annual Health and Safety Fair.

Above: CERT members

Above Right: Emergency Auxiliary members

Right: RACES members



CERT Class

The 2018 CERT Class members began their training on January 13 and celebrated completing the 24-hour course on February 3 by participating in the final exercise. Since the class was relatively small this year, many CERT “veterans” took the opportunity to attend the classes to refresh their skills. Once again, instructors for the majority of the classes were seasoned first responders from Winfield and Arkansas City Fire/EMS Departments. The final exercise, held at the Aviator Church in Winfield, was led by Steve Williams.

All-Hazards Weather Radios

The National Weather Service Office in Wichita provided our agencies with 11 NOAA All-Hazards Weather Radios to be used in educational settings. In cooperation with the City-Cowley County Health Department, we were able to identify and provide those radios to daycare facilities to help them protect their children during severe weather.

National Night Out

National Night Out 2018 was held in Arkansas City at Wilson Park and was a successful event for the Arkansas City Police Department. For Cowley County Emergency Management we were able to attend, visit with citizens, hand out emergency preparedness materials and talk about our different volunteer groups we provide within the county. We took the Mobile Command Center to Wilson Park for visitors to observe its operations. Several other public safety entities were also present and handed out information for the citizens of Arkansas City.



Storm Fury on the Plains

The annual storm spotter training was held at the Cowley Cinema 8 Theater near Strother Field on Tuesday, February 27. Two separate presentations were given by Chance Hayes, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Wichita. The 2:30pm presentation had 105 attendees and the 6:30pm presentation had 83 attendees for a total of 188. Twenty NOAA All-Hazard Weather Radios were given away during those sessions which now provide early severe weather warnings to that many new households in Cowley County.



EOC/911 School Tours

On October 9 and 16, Eisenhower High School from Goddard, KS visited Cowley County and toured the EOC and 911 Communications Center. The tour groups consisted of high school freshman and there were a total of 47 visitors. The groups had the opportunity to hear about Emergency Management and what is done on a day to day basis and during disasters. They also learned the vital role that dispatchers play for the success of the entire emergency response system.



Severe Weather Operations

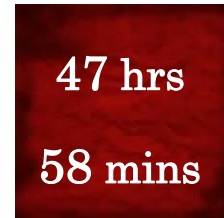
Cowley County EM, by use of the Emergency Operations Center, coordinates severe weather response activities. The EOC is the hub for all spotters, fire, and law personnel to submit reports. Outdoor Warning Sirens are sounded from the EOC and situational awareness during severe weather is a top priority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

Severe Weather Statistics for 2018

EOC Activations



Time in the EOC



Severe Thunderstorm Watches



Severe Thunderstorm Warnings



Severe Hail Reports



Severe Wind Reports



Tornado Watches



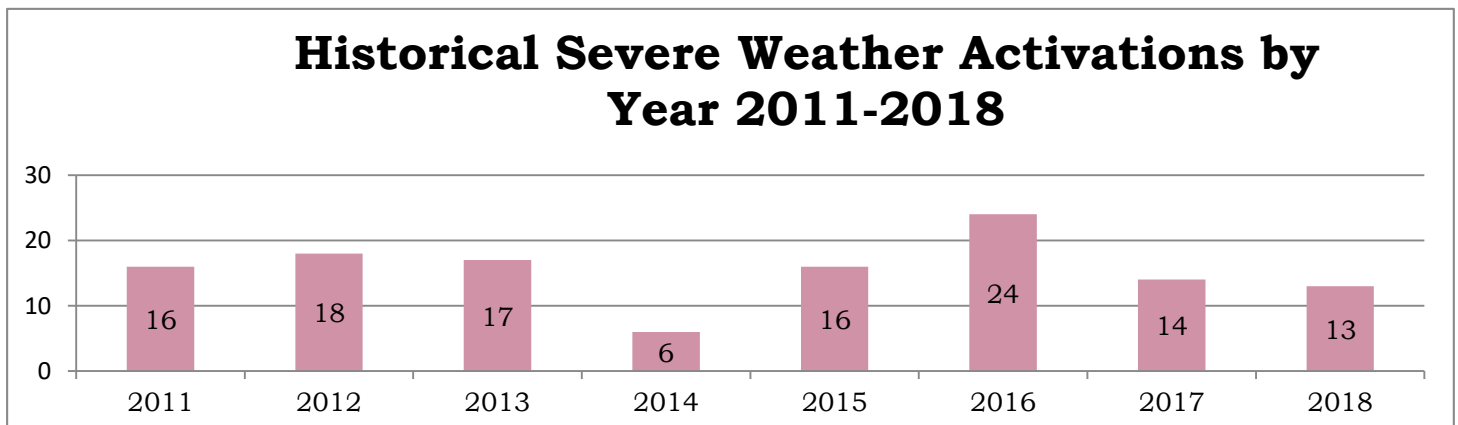
Tornado Warnings



Tornadoes



Historical Severe Weather Activations by Year 2011-2018



May 14, 2018 - Tornadoes

May 14, 2018 started off just like any other day in May would. The morning temperatures were a bit high and so was the humidity. As Emergency Management professionals, we did our regular checks of the National Weather Service - Wichita (NWS) and the Storm Prediction Center (SPC) websites. The potential for severe weather for this day had been a thought for a couple of days prior so it was not unusual that Cowley County, and many other counties in Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri were in the Slight Risk category for the day. The NWS displayed a graphic with severe weather possible with the main hazards being golf ball size hail and 60mph winds. In our field, these forecasts are not uncommon, especially in the month of May.

At 1:22pm, the SPC issued a Severe Thunderstorm Watch for much of Kansas, including Cowley County, until 10:00pm. Our first excitement of the day started at 3:15pm when the NWS issued a Significant Weather Advisory for the southwestern part of our County. The storm system moved slowly to the northeast for a little over two hours. At 5:15pm a Severe Thunderstorm Warning was issued for much of the western part of Cowley County. At 6:02pm, the NWS updated the warning to include a possible tornado as a hazard.

At 6:14pm, the first of five Tornado Warnings was issued for Cowley County. Spotters surrounded the area of question which was now moving slowly to the southeast and approaching the Strother Field Airport. A funnel quickly developed on the west side of the airport. The storm continued to move south and east eventually dropping a tornado (EF-0) two miles west of the South Central Kansas Medical Center (hospital) at 6:40pm. That particular system produced hail up to the size of ping pong balls. The storm moved southeast passing to the north of Arkansas City, just north of Silverdale and south of Maple City before leaving the State (for now).

During this time, other spotters and units were watching another severe thunderstorm moving across the northern portion of the County. Many spotters returned to the EOC to regroup and get ready for a second round of storms approaching our County.

After the first storm left our State, it decided to make a u-turn and come back. At 9:46pm, an EF-2 tornado struck two miles northeast of Maple City and stayed on the ground for 17 minutes. At 9:55pm an EF-1 tornado struck a separate area 3.6 miles east-northeast of Maple City and also stayed on the ground for 17 minutes.

As if this were not enough for our crews, another storm was brewing just northeast of Winfield and it quickly produced a tornado warning. At 9:53pm an EF-1 tornado briefly struck 2.8 miles northeast of Winfield. At 9:56pm another EF-1 tornado struck 3.8 miles northeast of Winfield and stayed on the ground for five minutes. Lastly, another EF-1 tornado struck 2.5 miles southwest of Burden at 10:03pm and stayed down for two minutes.

NWS survey teams scoured the areas the next day to confirm and document the previously mentioned information. May 14 proved to be a record day of tornadoes for Cowley County with seven overall. Previously the most seen in this County was four on June 8, 1984. Fortunately, there were no fatalities and no known injuries. The property damage estimate is unknown.

This day was a great example of how quickly storms can become severe and create potentially devastating consequences. Being prepared is something everyone should practice and be ready to take action at any moment.

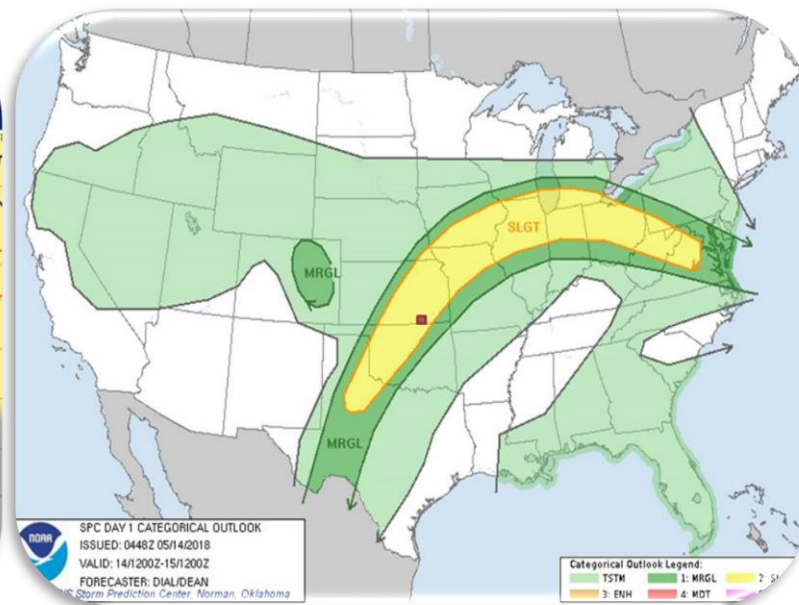
Wichita

Severe storms late this afternoon & evening

- Timing:**
After 3 pm
- Threats:**
Golf ball hail & 60 mph winds.
High rainfall rates & localized flooding

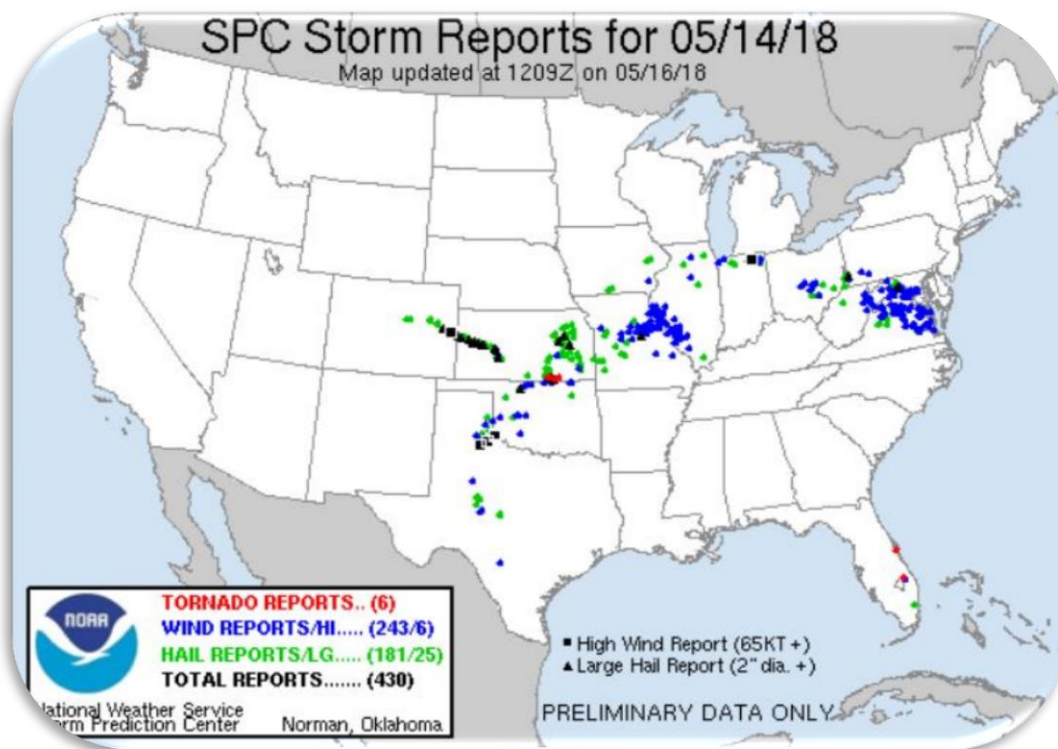
Map showing the primary area most likely to receive severe weather on May 14, with a red box highlighting the area around Wichita. Locations labeled include Concordia, Topeka, Salina, Emporia, Great Bend, Hutchinson, Eureka, Chanute, Medicine Lodge, Wichita, and Coffeyville.

Published on: 05/14/2018 at 6:17AM



Above: Image courtesy of the National Weather Service Office in Wichita showing the primary area most likely to receive severe weather on May 14.

Above: Image courtesy of the National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center with the Day 1 Categorical Outlook for May 14.



Above: Image courtesy of the National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center with storm reports for May 14.



Above: 6:15pm - A supercell approximately 3 miles south and 1 mile west of Winfield moving to the southeast.

Below: 6:34pm - A funnel forms on the western side of the tarmac at the Strother Field Airport between Arkansas City and Winfield.



Communications

Amateur Radio Class

Cowley County Emergency Management, in cooperation with the Cowley County Amateur Radio Club, once again held a Technician Level Amateur Radio class in 2018. 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 large-scale disasters. The class sessions were held during the month of March, and resulted in 7 new operators. Through classes held since 2011, the total number of new operators in Cowley County is now 86.

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 without any existing equipment installed. In 2018, the Cowley County Amateur Radio Club again worked together with Cowley County Emergency Management to participate in the event. The group moved to the Winfield Fairground this year, and as in years past, the Cowley County Mobile Command trailer was used for shelter and generator power. 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.

Preparedness

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. To date, there are 56 different agencies/entities in the State of Kansas that are Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors.

StormReady®

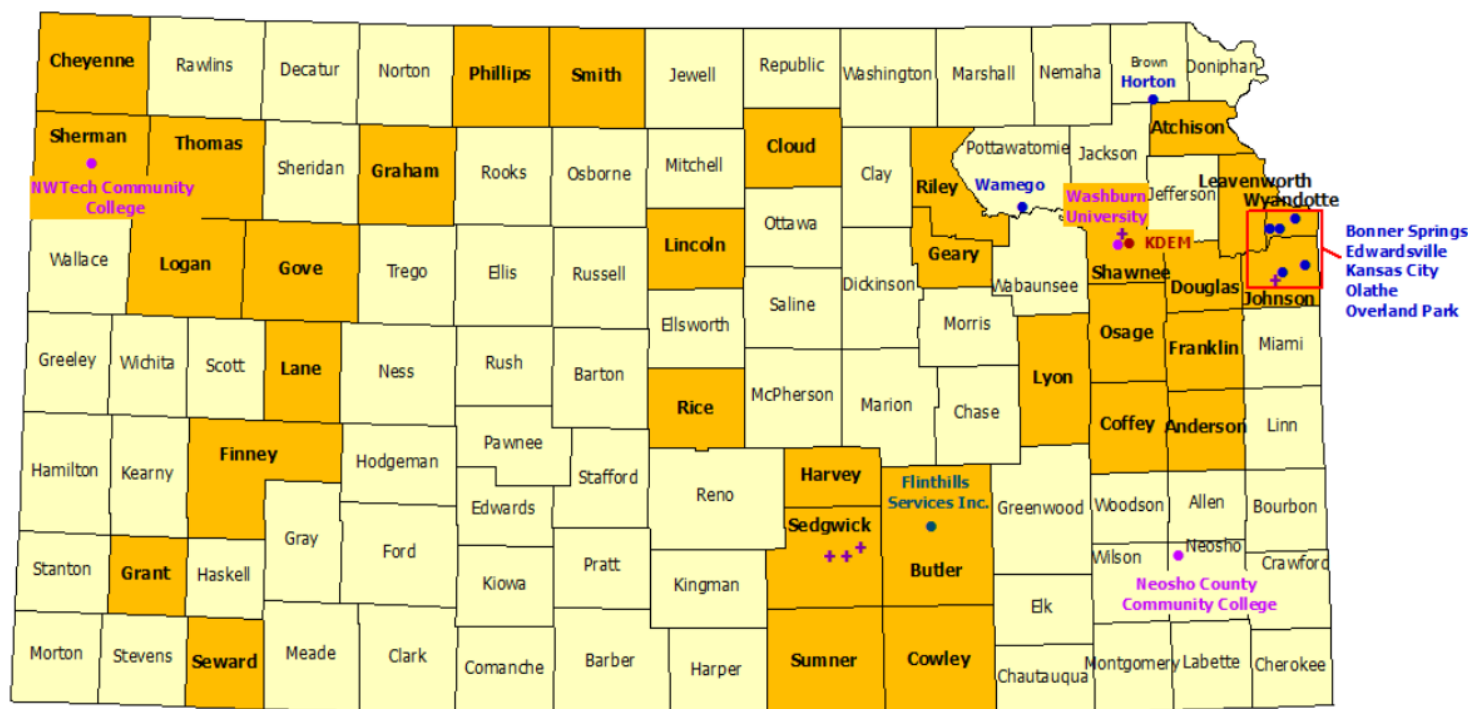
Cowley County is proud to be a StormReady® County since 1999. To remain a StormReady® community, Cowley County must adhere to the following guidelines:



- 1) Communication: establish a 24-hour warning point (CCEC) and establish an EOC;
- 2) NWS Information Reception: have 4 separate ways for the EOC/WP to received 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 biannually, 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.

This year, Cowley County celebrated its sixth renewal making this eighteen years straight.

As of the end of 2018, Kansas had 45 StormReady® designations, with 33 of those being Counties.



StormReady® Sites in Kansas.
Image courtesy of The National Weather Service

EXERCISES

The Cowley County Emergency Management department is dedicated to the training and exercising of the local community. Two exercises were performed with numerous community agencies and also state and federal partners. These exercises test capabilities from the National Preparedness Goal and were written to Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) standards. The lessons learned from these exercises are reviewed and a specific training program is authored to address the needed areas. This progressive approach enriches the community and ensures that Cowley County is ready to respond and recover from disasters.

Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan

Cowley County, in compliance with the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) requirements, 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 came together to 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 fifth year Cowley County has completed this plan, which is reviewed mid-year. In 2018 we saw a greater attendance and participation for this workshop highlighting the need for continued collaboration among all agencies.

Integrated Warning Team Table Top Exercise (TTX)

On January 23, the yearly Integrated Warning Team (IWT) meeting was held. For the first time, a tabletop exercise was held with all disciplines and jurisdictions. Primary objectives were to illustrate the wide range of stakeholders across the State that must come together to coordinate and collaborate during a natural disaster. Furthermore, it highlighted the roles/responsibilities, information needs and methods of communication for all players. John Stradal of Cowley County was the primary point of contact and lead facilitator for this exercise.



Left: Chance Hayes, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the US National Weather Service in Wichita begins the IWT meeting.

Right: John Stradal of Cowley County Emergency Management and Chance Hayes of the US National Weather Service in Wichita begin the TTX during the IWT meeting.



Fair Game Table Top Exercise (TTX)

On February 13 agencies from Cowley County joined eighteen other counties of South Central Kansas for a Mass Fatality TTX. The exercise was meant to test local and regional capabilities during a mass fatality incident. Agencies that participated were Cowley County Emergency Management, the City-Cowley County Health Department, William Newton Hospital and the South Central Kansas Medical Center.



Tisdale Bed and Breakfast Full Scale Exercise

On September 6 a full scale exercise was conducted at the Tisdale Methodist Church. The exercise replicated a shelter operation that also included the Cowley County Public Information Officer group and the Cowley County Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) with specific operational capabilities that were tested. A total of 22 different agencies participated. This exercise was to test lessons learned/changes in plans and policies from the real world Kansas Veterans Home relocation earlier in the year. The exercise was a huge success and proved that the Tisdale Methodist Church is a perfect location for a Red Cross shelter. All agencies and individuals excelled at the unique situations that were presented. The relationship between Cowley County Emergency Management and the local community continues to strive toward the Vision of Cowley County Emergency Management of "Cowley County, KS will be a community of cities and citizens who are disaster aware and disaster prepared."



Left: Volunteers prepare for an influx of citizens seeking temporary shelter.

Right: RACES members set up on-site communications.

Preparedness

"When you need it, but don't have it....you sing a different tune."

~ Burt Gummer

Dust in the Wind Functional Exercise

It is said that history repeats itself. On October 6, 2016, Cowley County was subjected to a rapidly forming storm that gave the Emergency Management staff literally 11 minutes to react and provide early warning to the citizens. The first alert came in the form of a Significant Weather Advisory at 2:01pm. At 2:08pm, a Severe Thunderstorm Warning was issued and at 2:12pm, the first of several Tornado Warnings were issued.

The annual Auxiliary exercise, titled Dust in the Wind, was based off of these real world events. Cowley County's volunteers from the CCEA and RACES performed extremely well while dealing with the stresses of an event such as this. Numerous community partners gathered to provide support and input to the exercise. It is the intention of Cowley County Emergency Management to author community based exercises so there is a sense of "whole community" response. The National Weather Service and Elk County Emergency Management attended and observed/evaluated. This union of regional partners enhances the response relationship not only during an exercise but ultimately when disaster strikes.

TRAINING

American Red Cross Shelter Fundamental Training

The year 2018 meant it was time for the Emergency Operations Plan to be reviewed and re-promulgated by the County Commission. This plan has many parts and takes a substantial time to review. While all portions received a thorough review, a little bit of extra attention was given to ESF 6 - Mass Care and Housing which involves post-event sheltering of citizens. Previous Memorandums of Understanding were reviewed and updated with all of the designated shelter facilities. In addition to those updates, the American Red Cross brought two instructors to Cowley County and provided a training course on Shelter Fundamentals. The class was given to EM staff, volunteers from EM groups and two shelter representatives. The training covered the basics of opening a shelter, registration, feeding, and how to set up and store the cots.



ICS 300 and 400 Training

Cowley County was able to host two separate training courses this year. On September 18-19, a G300 - Intermediate Incident Command System Course for Expanding Incidents was held. This course provided training and resources for personnel needing to further their knowledge in ICS specifically for larger incidents and the creation of an Incident Action Plan (IAP) . On September 25-26, a G400 - Advanced Incident Command System Course for Command and General Staff was held. It focused on putting all the pieces together and working within the Multiagency Coordination System. The classes were held in the Wright Room of the Brown Center on the Cowley College Campus.

The G300 course trained 67 participants and the G400 trained 37. These are professionals from across the area that are able to take that knowledge and apply to their own jurisdictions and agencies.



WORKING WITH AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Training

The end of 2017 and all of 2018 has been a time that all health care facilities who receive Medicare or Medicaid funding have been diligently working on their emergency preparedness plans. We have seen a rise in our participation of these agencies on our LEPC. It is always great to have more community partners at the table when planning or preparing for disasters.

On April 4, Cowley County EM held a training session geared primarily for those CMS-funded agencies within Cowley County. There were two main topics of this training session: Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) and Exercises. EM staff provided an hour long discussion based learning environment which covered these two topics. Many of the participants used this as a time to gather some basic knowledge, but also as a time to get to know each other. Fifteen participants from eight different facilities attended the session.

PIO Working Group

Formed in 2016, the PIO Working Group is comprised of Public Information and Public Relations Officers from entities across Cowley County. Our mission is to provide accurate information in a timely manner to help citizens make informed decisions.

Day to day events show us the need to disseminate information in a routine manner. However, emergency events or disasters dictate an immediate response to the community. Together, this group is learning to share resources, how to disseminate accurate information quickly, yet still remain responsible for their own jurisdiction.

This group participated in their first full-scale exercise. Six members of the group came together and formed a Joint Information Center using the Cowley County Mobile Command Center during the Tisdale Bed and Breakfast exercise. Participants were provided multiple injects during the exercise. The team worked together to prioritize and share information, provided a written press release and participated in a press conference to conclude the event.

The Cowley County PIO Working Group continues to grow and search for more ways to learn and improve their skills when dealing with the media and the general public.



Left: PIO Working Group members receive, evaluate, prioritize and distribute information out of the Mobile Command Center during the exercise.

Right: PIO Working Group members conduct a mock press conference to end the exercise.



NOTABLE EVENTS

Kansas Veterans' Home Evacuation/Shelter - August

On August 1, the EM office received a call around noon from the Winfield High School (WHS) that they had been contacted about sheltering residents of the Kansas Veterans' Home (KVH). The WHS is an identified shelter in Cowley County and has an agreement with the KVH for such an occasion. The KVH was experiencing a loss of air conditioning due to a mechanical malfunction and the date for repair was not known yet. It was determined that an unknown amount of special needs residents would be transported to the WHS in the next couple of hours.

EM notified volunteer groups who assembled within minutes to WHS and were ready for action. Sheltering supplies arrived and preparations were made to house up to 80 residents. As the day progressed, two separate sheltering areas were created in separate areas of the school to accommodate residents with different needs. The residents began arriving in the early evening by bus, and were checked in by EM volunteers, KVH staff and American Red Cross (ARC) volunteers. All residents were in place by 11:00pm. The KVH provided meal and medical services, along with all normal staffing and shifts. Cowley Co EM volunteers played a vital role in the shelter management operations with WHS staff. A Joint Information System was established between WHS, KVH, ARC and EM personnel to handle social media posts and media inquiries.

By August 3, the mechanical issues were resolved and all residents were moved back to the KVH by noon. A special thanks goes out to everyone that assisted during the setup/takedown, sheltering operations or provided donations. It was a team effort that could not have been done alone.



Left: Final set up in the Auxiliary gym of the Winfield High School.

Right: The team makes final planning preparations prior to the arrival of residents to be sheltered.




Rain/Flood - October


On October 4, rain began to fall in Cowley County and surrounding areas. Much of Cowley County received rainfall amounts in the 8-9" range over the next five days. The Walnut and Arkansas Rivers flooded, closing roads and damaging roads along the rivers. Early estimates indicated that Cowley County suffered nearly \$147,000 worth of damages and losses from the rains and subsequent flooding. The Kansas Division of Emergency Management met with six potential disaster applicants on October 23, 2018 to collect damage information. The request for a Presidential Declaration has been made. To date, no final word on this disaster has been received.

Social Media in Emergency Management

Cowley County Emergency Management began using social media tools, specifically Facebook and Twitter, in February 2012. Our goal is to reach out and interact with the public before, during and after emergencies or disasters. 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 situation reports, bridge work, road closings, preparedness tips, departmental plans and volunteer group information. Go to <http://www.cowleycounty.org/em> to check out our latest information.

 Cowley County EM has 931 Twitter followers and has sent a total of 6,458 tweets to our followers. A tweet on November 12 about icy conditions garnered 6,056 impressions.

 Cowley County EM has 4,406 Facebook followers. The two cities with the most followers are Winfield (1,343) and Arkansas City (1,325). The most popular time our followers view our page is 8:00pm. Posts on two dates generated the most reaches: November 4 (School Bus Safety Graphic) reached 17,261 viewers and May 14 (Tornado Warning) reached 16,369 viewers.

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