



2021 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.

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



February 1, 2022

COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Management Staff**Brian Stone, CEM®, KCEM**
Director**John Stradal, KCEM**
Assistant Coordinator**Jason Kazban, KCEM, MEP**
EM Specialist**Taylor Dory, KCEM**
Volunteer Coordinator**Cowley Co. Emergency Auxiliary (CCEA)****Cameron Groom**
President**Kevin McClung**
Vice-President**Crystal Merz**
Secretary**Adam Bauler/Noah DeLaughter**
Treasurer**Ron Upton**
Communications Officer**Inside this Issue**

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"Alone we can do little; together we can do so much." - Helen Keller

Meet the Staff

Brian Stone, CEM®, KCEM - Director

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 is the liaison between KEMA and the KAC and has served three years. Brian is a member of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), the Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA), and the Kansas Association of Public Information Officers (KAPIO) and facilitates the local Public Information Officers (PIO) Working Group. He renewed his Certified Emergency Manager (CEM®) designation through IAEM and is valid through 2027. He is one of only 20 EM Professionals in Kansas and nearly 2,000 worldwide to hold that certification.

John Stradal, KCEM - Assistant Coordinator

John continues to serve as the Vice-President for the South-Central Region of the Kansas Emergency Management Association, representing the region as one of 11 members on the KEMA Board of Directors. He is also involved with the Cowley County Amateur Radio Club and works with this organization to build and enhance communications capabilities within the county.

Jason Kazban, KCEM, MEP - EM Specialist

Jason performs duties as an Emergency Management Specialist. As a FEMA certified Master Exercise Practitioner, he writes county and community based progressive Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) exercises to enhance community resilience. He is also a shelter certifier for the American Red Cross. Jason is a member of KAPIO (Kansas Association of Public Information Officers) and the local Cowley County PIO group. He also maintains his status as a Kansas Certified Emergency Manager.

Taylor Dory, KCEM - Volunteer Coordinator

Taylor began his career with Emergency Management in early 2017 as the Volunteer Coordinator. He successfully received his Kansas Certified Emergency Manager (KCEM) professional certification through the Kansas Emergency Management Association. Taylor is a volunteer firefighter for Cowley County Fire District #3 – Burden and obtained his Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification in November. He is actively involved with KEMA and has served on the Scholarship Committee and is now serving on the Conference and Nominating Committees.

All staff members belong to the Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA).

KEMA was formed in 1977 and is a network of leaders dedicated to providing excellence in emergency management and homeland security for Kansas. KEMA is committed to promoting excellence through professionalism, fostering communication and cooperation through teamwork, soliciting input and active participation through responsiveness, and advocating for progressive growth through leadership.¹



¹ KEMA Website: <https://kema.org/>

Accomplishments and Highlights

KEMA's Outstanding Service Award

Brian Stone and Taylor Dory were awarded an Outstanding Service Award by the Kansas Emergency Management Association's Board of Directors during the annual KEMA conference held in Mulvane on Thursday, September 16, 2021.

The nomination, submitted by John Stradal, read as follows: "Brian and Taylor have played an instrumental part in the implementation of Cowley County's Quarantine Box (Q-Box) program. Started in November of 2020, this program provides kits containing food and essential supplies to those recently tested for COVID-19 to ensure their immediate needs are met. A former work release facility that was being used for storage was converted to a warehouse, and pallets of food, toiletries, and other essentials were sourced. Once the supplies were delivered, staff from several County departments and volunteers from the community were scheduled to assemble the kits and make them ready for distribution by community partners. Through their coordination and hard work, and with the support of County Administration, over 2,000 kits have been assembled for the benefit of Cowley County citizens."



L-R: Butch Post, KEMA President; Taylor Dory, Cowley Co. EM Volunteer Coordinator, and Brian Stone, Cowley Co. EM Director.

Emergency Management Volunteers

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 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 original group dates to January 8th, 1985. The CCEA's primary role has previously been 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.

CCEA Volunteers have the ability to focus on one or more of the core functions:

- **Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Support** – work in the EOC during severe weather or other emergencies/disasters. These volunteers can provide assistance with dispatching, logging, mapping, radar interpretation and public information.
- **Severe Weather Spotting** – training spotters to go into the field during severe weather events to relay ground truth information back to the EOC.
- **Field/Event Support** – provide support to agencies or groups during emergencies and non-emergency events or activities. Emergency events could include manning a barricade, providing traffic control, or supporting shelter operations. Non-emergency events could include parade assistance or a public-oriented safety event.
- **Auxiliary Communications (AUXCOMM)** – provide assistance to EM or other public safety entities by supporting or augmenting regular communications systems or by establishing and maintaining backup systems in case of primary system failure.

A CCEA trainee must meet minimum training requirements as set forth in their by-laws and then each function has its own set of training. Those who wish to be considered for a leadership position must have additional training as well.

For 2021, volunteers worked a total of 523 hours to serve the community and citizens.

“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.” – Winston Churchill

Grants

On June 7, 2021, Cowley County Emergency Management received a \$7,600.00 grant from the TC Energy Foundation. The funds from this grant were used to upgrade the communications capabilities of the Mobile Command Center.



On September 9, 2021, Cowley County Emergency Management received a \$20,000.00 grant from Phillips 66 pipeline. This grant will fund updated communications equipment for the staff and volunteers.



L-R: John Stradal, Cowley Co. EM; Braden Clark, P66 Pipeliner; Brian Stone, Cowley Co. EM; Nolan Dealy, P66 Pipeliner/Area Representative; and Wayne Wilt & Bob Voegele, Cowley Co. Commissioners.



On September 24, 2021, the Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary was one of 25 recipients to receive a \$2,000.00 grant from the Legacy Regional Community Foundation. The CCEA is pleased and honored to receive this grant from Legacy.



Community Outreach and Education

Public Education and Outreach

Public education and outreach are a major part of our day-to-day duties in Emergency Management. While we cannot reach everybody, it is important to reach as many citizens as possible to share public safety tips and preparedness information. The year 2021 was a bit different so opportunities to perform community outreach were limited. We were able to attend perform presentations for two shifts at General Electric, Cambridge Fire Dept., Early Birds Lion's Club, Upward Bound (Cowley College) and Roosevelt Elementary School (2nd grade). Additionally, we reached many more during the annual Health and Safety Fair held in Arkansas City. Each activity we attend is an opportunity to educate or assist our citizens and we truly enjoy every opportunity we have.

Storm Fury on the Plains

Due to the lingering effects of the pandemic, the National Weather Service (NWS) was unable to conduct in person presentations in 2021. The NWS did facilitate six online courses open to the public.

Turn Around Don't Drown Signs

The National Weather Service in Wichita awarded Cowley County EM with two sets of 'Turn Around Don't Drown' signs that were placed near locations that commonly flood and create dangerous conditions for drivers. The first is on 26th Road west of Rock in northern Cowley County and the second is on 132nd Road west of US77 northeast of Winfield Both sets are near the Walnut River.

Picture: L-R

Janet Salazar, NWS Service Hydrologist

Brian Stone, EM Director

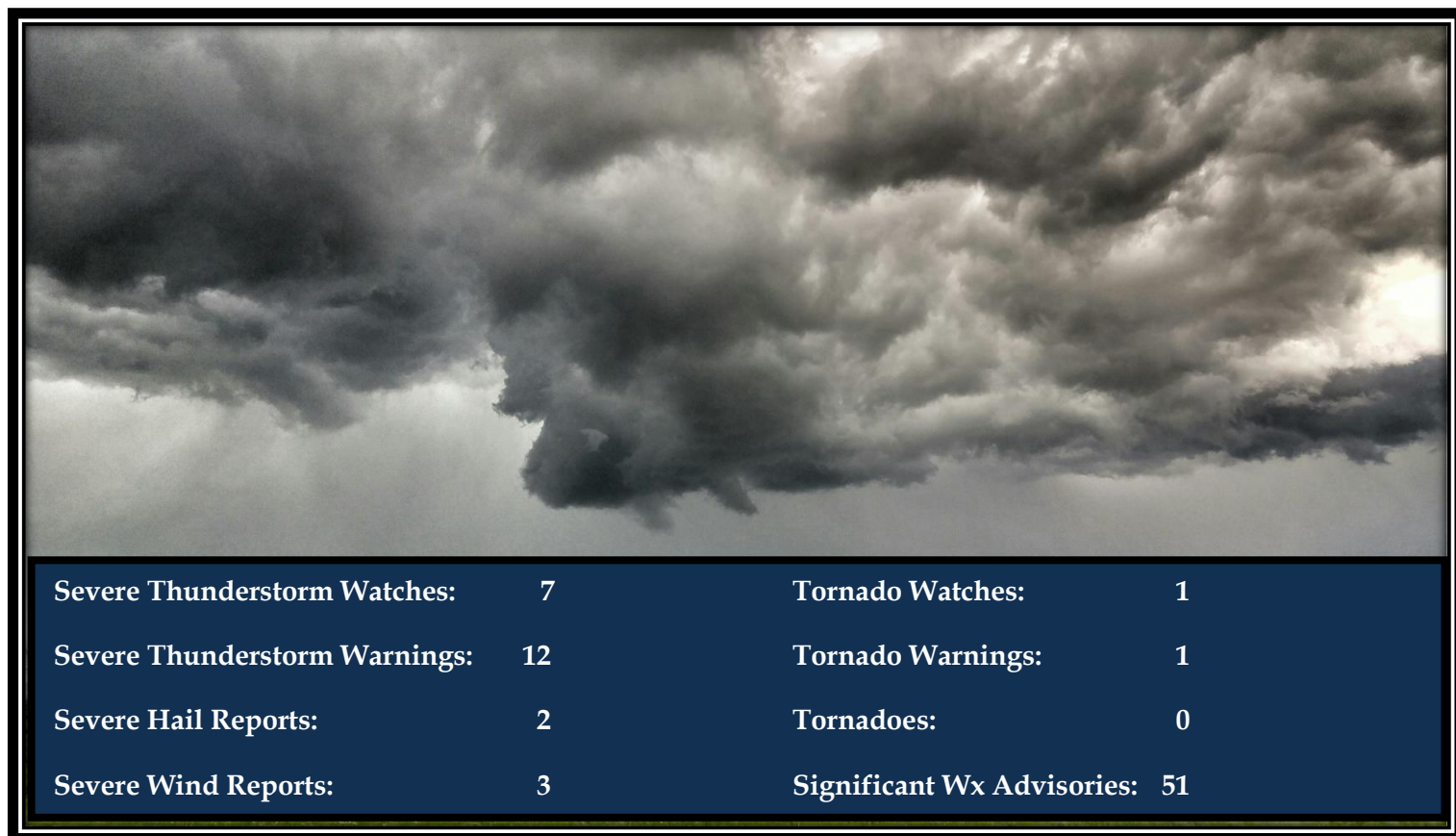
Jon Jordan, Public Works Superintendent



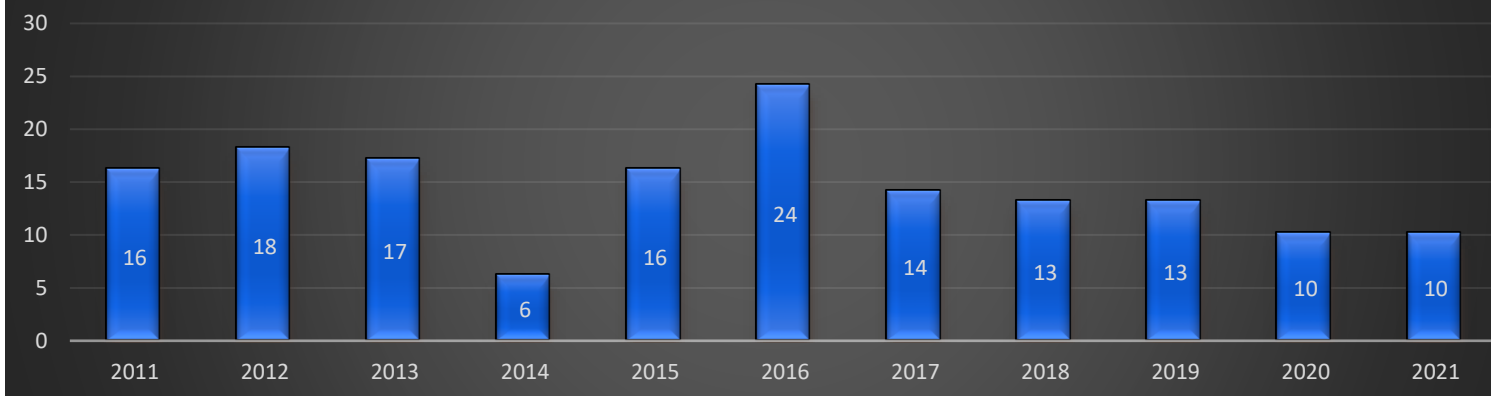
Severe Weather Operations

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

Severe Weather Statistics for 2021



Historical Severe Weather Activations by Year 2011-2021



Preparedness

Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador

As a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador, Cowley County serves 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 marks the 22nd year that Cowley County has been considered a StormReady® county. On September 2, 2021, we received our 7th renewal which is valid through September 5, 2025.

As of the end of 2021, Kansas had 52 StormReady® designations, with 36 of those being counties.



EXERCISES

AUXCOMM to the Rescue

On May 15, 2021, Cowley County Emergency Management and the Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary conducted a functional exercise titled "AUXCOMM to the Rescue." There were two independent communication teams that deployed personally owned communication assets to two geographically separated locations in Winfield. The exercise was kicked off by an Everbridge notification to the volunteers. This action is vitally important to ensure the system is proven to be operational prior to any real-world event. Both teams were proficient in setting up a communication system that was able to send voice and data communications to the Emergency Operations Center and to communicate laterally with each other as well. The exercise was a success and further shows the quality of Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary and their dedication to the community.



L-R: Joe Rose, KD0OBX; Chad Flower, KD0OCA; Justin Waite, KD0OBU; and Taylor Dory, KF0BAD all participate in the "AUXCOMM to the Rescue" exercise in Winfield.

Integrated Preparedness and Planning Workshop (IPPW)

This year, Cowley County held an Integrated Preparedness and Planning Workshop (IPPW) instead of the traditional Training and Exercise Planning Workshop. In addition to training and exercises, the IPPW is expected to integrate other aspects into the whole community concept including risk assessments, planning efforts, grant priorities and other preparedness activities. The goal is to document overall preparedness priorities and activities, to maximize efficiency of resources, time and funding and to work towards improving jurisdiction/organization capabilities. The primary product of this event is the creation of a three-year training and exercise plan for local agencies to build upon and create a progressive approach in both of those areas.

GETS & WPS Seminar

Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) and Wireless Priority Service (WPS) are two tools available to government and private critical infrastructure organizations to aid in making calls during times of high cellular and landline phone system use. EM hosted a webinar on December 14 which gave an overview of these services. Some agencies/jurisdictions that participated were already subscribers and some will sign up for future use.

TRAINING

Training for 2021 was still limited due to the pandemic. However, three staff members were able to attend several training courses at the annual KEMA conference in September.

WORKING WITH AND IN THE COMMUNITY

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 remain responsible for their own jurisdiction.

The Cowley County PIO Working Group was able to work together closely again this year during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Lead PIO for the pandemic is the City-Cowley County Health Department and this group served as the virtual Joint Information Center (JIC).

Preparedness

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

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.cowleycountyks.gov/em> to check out our latest information.



Cowley County EM ended the year with 1,104 Twitter followers and sent a total of 672 (thru Dec 28 at 1350) tweets to our followers in 2021. A tweet on June 22 regarding two sets of 'Turn Around Don't Drown' signs awarded to our agency from the NWS garnered 4,973 impressions.



Cowley County EM ended the year with 6,602 Facebook followers. The two cities with the most followers are Winfield (1,863) and Arkansas City (1,862). A post on November 2 regarding the KEMA Award presented to two staff members resulted in 6,390 views.

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