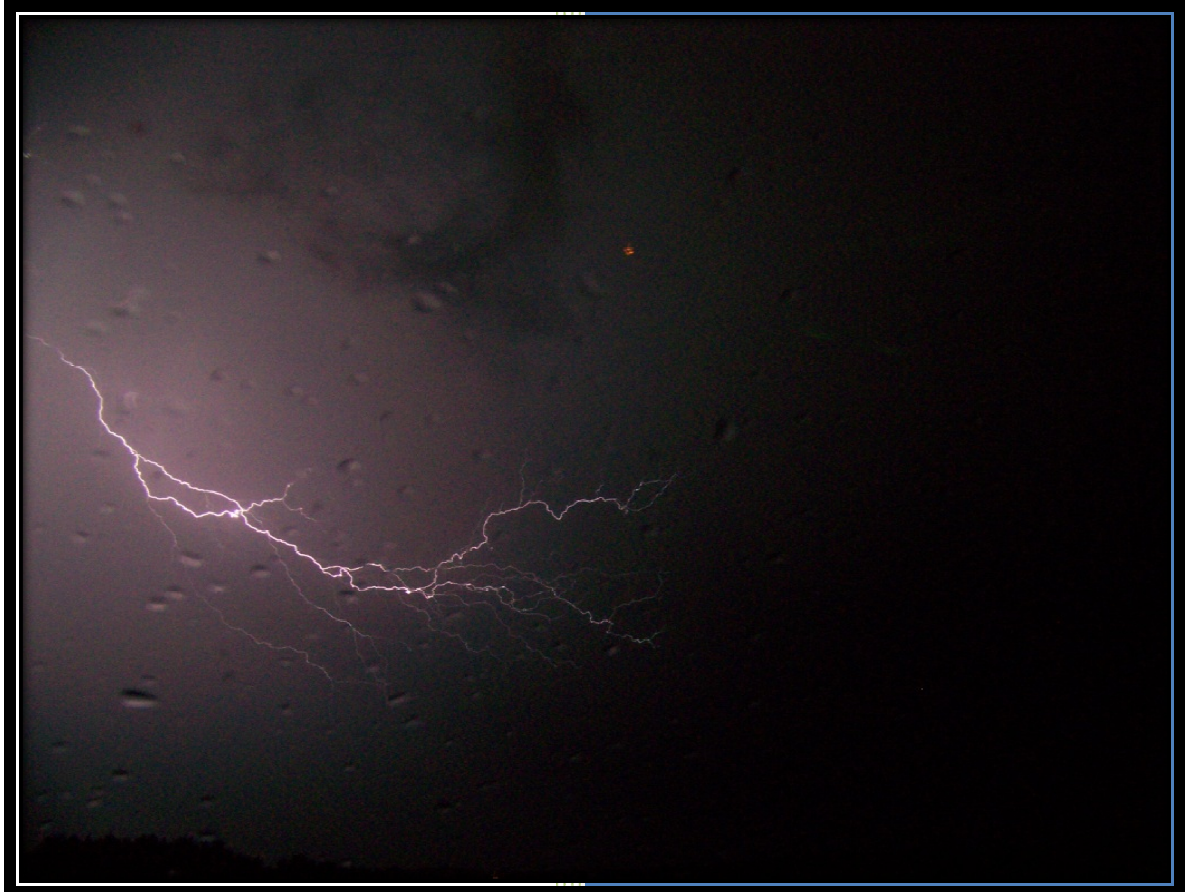


2012 Annual Report



Cowley County Emergency Management is pleased to release their first annual report. This report will highlight activities, accomplishments and an overall review of the Emergency Management program.

Please take time to look it over. Emergency Management is a field which requires a vast amount of commitment from the staff along with a tireless dedication from numerous volunteers.

Emergency Management strives to work with all agencies within the County in order to help agencies and individuals become more aware of our hazards and to be as prepared as we can be.

MEET THE COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STAFF AND VOLUNTEER LEADERS



Brian Stone, CEM, KCEM – Coordinator
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.



Justin Lauppe – CCEA President
Justin 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. Justin is an EMT with Winfield Area EMS and also works part-time as a Park Ranger with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.



John Stradal, KCEM, - Assistant Coordinator
Responsible for the exercise program, county-wide sirens and communications for the agency. Assists in all planning efforts. Directs the department in the absence of the Coordinator.



Jolan Csukas - Volunteer Coordinator
Responsible for the recruitment, activities and sustainability of all four volunteer programs (Emergency Auxiliary, Community Emergency Response Teams, Medical Reserve Corps and County Animal Response Teams).



Cheryl Underwood – CERT President
Cheryl oversees the daily operations of the CERT program which include monthly meetings, training and program expenditures. Cheryl works as a Special Education Teacher for USD 465 Winfield.



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.

Staff Accomplishments:

Coordinator Brian Stone, who had served 3 years as the South Central Region Vice-President of the Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA) was elected President for 2013.

Assistant Coordinator John Stradal was appointed to oversee the re-certification section of the Kansas Certified Emergency Manager (KCEM) Program for KEMA. John was selected to join the State RACES Working Group and also became a member of the South Central Kansas Incident Management Team.

What is Emergency Management?

Cowley County is subject to the effects of natural, technological or man-made disasters such as tornadoes, high winds, flooding, ice storms, drought, electrical outages and hazardous materials releases. It is the responsibility of this agency to assist all local governmental agencies along with school districts, private businesses and individuals to be as prepared as possible.

Emergency Management staff and volunteers are available 24 hours a day for response and coordination of emergencies, disasters and planned events.

MOST DISASTERS CANNOT BE PREVENTED....BUT COULD YOU RECOVER?

Every day the news is filled with stories of disasters such as SuperStorm Sandy, the Joplin and Greensburg tornadoes and even earthquakes in Oklahoma. These are great reminders that we need to prepare for emergencies and disasters, but that we also need to recover from them as well. One great way to plan for recovery is to have a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). A COOP plan lays out how an agency will continue to provide essential services during an interruption of normal business activities. If you have questions or need some assistance on COOP planning, please contact one of the staff members at Emergency Management.

Communications

"Can You Hear Me Now?"

In 2012, Cowley County was faced with a monumental task... the narrowbanding of all radio communications systems within the county. This conversion was mandated by the FCC, and the overall purpose was to increase the number of available channels within certain parts of the two-way radio spectrum. This was done by decreasing the amount of space each individual channel is allowed to occupy. The concept can be likened to converting a four lane highway to eight lanes, without increasing the amount of pavement. In this analogy, each lane would represent an individual channel, and the pavement represents the amount of available radio spectrum.

All agencies within Cowley County that use two-way radios were involved in the narrowbanding process in some form. When an assessment was performed in 2010, approximately 50% of the radio systems within the county were already operating in narrowband mode. The remaining agencies had at least a majority of radios that were capable of narrowband operation, but still had to replace some radios that were not narrowband capable and complete the conversion. Since most public safety agencies within Cowley County have the ability to interoperate on different agency's communications systems throughout the county, even if an individual radio system was already operating in narrowband mode, the agency's radios still had to be reprogrammed to maintain the ability to talk between systems. With over 750 radios being used by public safety agencies alone in Cowley County, this would be no small task.

In October of 2010, a countywide Narrowband Committee was formed to address the multitude of questions and issues prompted by the narrowband mandate, and to help coordinate the transition. Through the coordination efforts of this committee, and the cooperation of all involved agencies, a successful transition was made, with the final radios narrowbanded in November of 2012.

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 2,384 hours of work in support of training, outreach and response to events in 2012.

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 the Cowley County Civil Defense. The group continues to strive to bring emergency preparedness to the citizens of Cowley County. The CCEA's primary role at this time is to provide storm spotters for Cowley County. This elite group of volunteers donate their valuable time and provide commitment to bring safety to the citizens of this county. The group also works hand in hand 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 and working with the public in weather and personal safety.

COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)

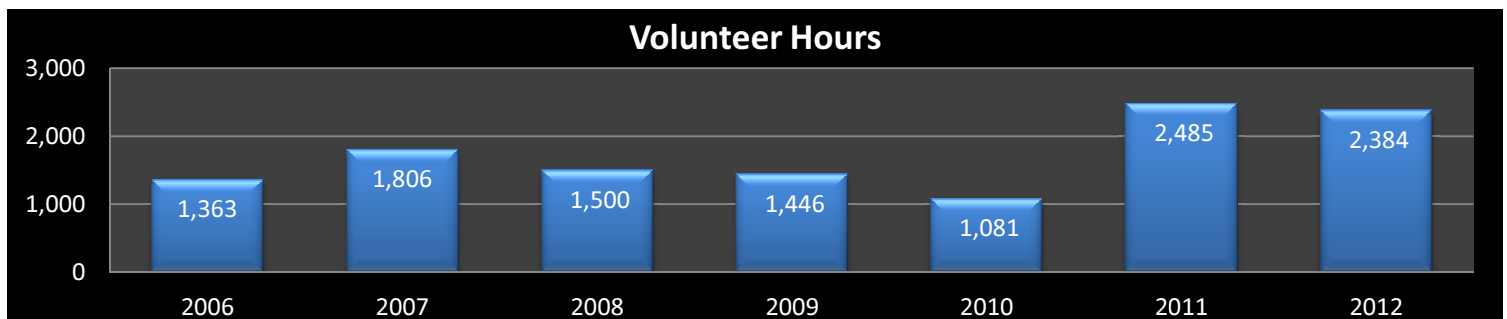
By joining CERT people from all walks of life have teamed together to volunteer in emergency situations. The initial training gives basic life skills to help themselves, family, and neighbors in case of a disaster. Further training is readily available to enhance these skills and broaden understanding of how to prepare for various disasters. 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 are also asked to help locally with community functions through traffic control, safety fairs, and opportunities for sharing information on emergency preparedness. Monthly meetings are held to keep members aware of upcoming events and for ongoing training.

COWLEY COUNTY MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS (MRC)

The Cowley County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) was established to provide a coordinated medical response to disaster. Recruitment is limited to licensed health and medical personnel, pharmacists, doctors, chiropractors and dentists and guidance is provided by the City-Cowley County Health Department. This group is also included in any exercises planned by CCHD and the Cowley County Emergency Management team.

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). Cowley County introduced the concept to interested citizens in the spring of 2012. 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 has applied for non-profit status under the Cowley County Emergency Response Volunteer umbrella which also includes CERT, MRC and CCEA.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

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 28, 2012. This was definitely a night to remember for many different reasons. First, we had a record turnout with 298 in attendance. Second, we had a marriage proposal during the program. Third, we had an actual weather event occur near the end of the program as 70+ mph winds tore through the Strother Field area tearing off the roof of the airport terminal building. The storms also caused damage in many other areas by downing power lines, destroying barns and uprooting trees. Some think we actually planned it that way.....

Severe Weather and Safety Presentations

Each year, EM staff and volunteers work hard to bring education out to the community. This year, we were able to reach out to a total of 927 citizens by providing presentations on Severe Weather and Safety, Continuity of Operations, and School Preparedness. Our outreach went into schools, police departments, civic clubs, private businesses, housing units, nursing homes, and DARE Camps.

CERT Lite

Each year, EM staff works with USD 465 to provide a “CERT Lite” course to freshmen and sophomore Health students. The concept is a community project for the students. It gives students a compacted crash course of the CERT program. It promotes safety and preparedness thinking among high school students and gives them an opportunity to decide if they would like to take the full course at a later date.

Symphony on the Prairie

Cowley County EM provides a variety of support for events throughout the year. This was the second year for this event and it is held in the spring of each year. This brings with it several issues, including the unpredictable spring weather (cold, wind and severe weather), ingress and egress issues and a lot of people driving and walking through pastures to reach their destination.

Health and Safety Fair

This year’s program was held at the fairgrounds in Winfield. Representatives from Emergency Management and all volunteer groups were on hand to interact with the public, explain the programs and recruit. Participants also had the opportunity to tour Cowley County’s Mobile Command Center.

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 2012, the EOC was activated 22 times for severe weather. During those activations, the sirens were sounded one time – February 28th at the Winfield City Lake for a law enforcement report of 70+ mph winds. Cowley County was placed under 7 Tornado Watches; however, no Tornado Warnings were issued and no tornadoes were reported. A total of 11 Severe Thunderstorm Watches and 18 Severe Thunderstorm Warnings were issued. There were three reports of severe hail (1” or larger) and eight reports of severe wind (58+mph).

TRAINING

Each year, Emergency Management hosts or sponsors training which is made available to all governmental jurisdictions and response agencies across the county.

Ham Radio Class

Cowley County Emergency Management in cooperation with the Cowley County Amateur Radio Club hosted a Technician Level Amateur Radio class. Ten new Amateur Radio Operators received licenses as a result of the class. The total number of new Operators in Cowley County is now 17.

CERT Class

Class #13 was held during the months of March and April on the campus of Southwestern College. The class graduated 9 new CERT members who were ready to put their new skills to work for the citizens of Cowley County.

Public Information Officer (PIO) Class

The campus of Cowley College was the location when EM hosted a Public Information Officer class in July. Attendees included many from local jurisdiction, but also some from outside of our area. The class was taught by Sharon Watson, Director of the Public Affairs Office for Kansas Adjutant General's Office and Mark Engholm of the Kansas Highway Patrol. The highlight was a chance to interview media personnel from local radio stations, internet newspapers and a Wichita TV station.

Anhydrous Ammonia Safety Training

Brandon Dills, compliance officer with Co-Mark, LLC joined us in November to provide a two-hour overview of Anhydrous Ammonia. One of the most commonly used chemicals today; Anhydrous Ammonia can provide a hazard to those who do not understand its purpose or how to handle it properly. This class focused on properly responding to a Hazardous Materials release and was highlighted by an update on grain silo safety.

Hazardous Materials Awareness

Hazardous Materials are part of our everyday lives. They are transported through Cowley County via rail, highway and pipeline. Responding to a hazmat situation is potentially life-threatening if the chemicals are not given the necessary respect they deserve. With the help of Lt. Chad Mayberry and Josh Dobbs, of the Winfield Fire Department, participants were given a four-hour awareness level course in proper response.

CPR and First Aid

Winfield Area EMS provided two CPR courses and one First Aid course for all Emergency Management Volunteers and Staff during the summer.

“THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF AN ORGANIZATION ARE THE RESULTS OF THE COMBINED EFFORT OF EACH INDIVIDUAL.”

VINCE LOMBARDI

20 Weeks to Preparedness

Emergency Management's message to the public has always been "plan and prepare." Toward that goal, we have utilized social media, local media and law enforcement's web sites to provide Cowley County citizens with as much preparedness information as possible. In late December, we began posting "20 Weeks to Preparedness", a shopping guide for stocking an emergency kit. The theory behind posting a short list each week of food, water, medical supplies, etc., is buying only 4-5 items at a time is less intimidating and expensive. There has been a strong and consistent following of the weekly posting since its inception, a good indicator that we do have their attention. An informed and prepared public will go a long way toward making a faster recovery. All of the information can be found on our website at www.cowleycounty.org/em/em-news

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 second year Cowley County has completed this plan, which is reviewed mid-year.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Cowley County Emergency Management began using social media tools on February 28, 2012. The intention 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.

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