

WILLIAMSBURG AREA EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (WARTS)

A PRESENTATION BY:
Debbie Sizemore, MSW, LPC
Community Health Coordinator, State of WV
PO Box 220
Williamsburg, WV 24991
debsizemore@hotmail.com

WHAT ARE WARTS?

The WARTS are an interdisciplinary group comprised of the Williamsburg Volunteer Rescue Squad, Williamsburg Volunteer Fire Department, Williamsburg Community Action, and the Northern Greenbrier Clinic, Inc.. The group is located in Greenbrier County, WV, and we formed in 2004.

WHERE ARE WE LOCATED?

The town of Williamsburg is located in the geographic center of Greenbrier County in southeastern WV. Williamsburg has a population of 414 people. There are 77,649.75 acres in the Williamsburg district, and this computes to about 20 people per square mile. The Williamsburg district covers 121.32 square miles.

WILLIAMSBURG, GREENBRIER COUNTY, WV



COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS OR PROOF WE ARE RURAL AND POOR

- Four businesses in community
- No stores in the town. Must travel 15-20 minutes to get gas or buy a loaf of bread or gallon of milk.
- No school in the community. High school closed 1962, junior high closed 1992, and elementary closed 2007. When elementary closed, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the students received free or reduced lunch.
- Only 52 people in the district have college degrees.
- Most people who work travel 30-45 minutes into Lewisburg, the county seat, or its surrounding area to do so
- There is only 1 two-lane highway going into the community. Most of the roads in the area are one-lane and some are unpaved.
- The nearest hospital is 35-40 minutes away – if one is sitting in the middle of town. Of course transport time is longer if one is in the more isolated areas of the district.
- Most of the area is comprised of senior citizens on fixed incomes.

WHY DID WE FORM?

FLOODING!!

TYREE ROAD NORMALLY



TYREE ROAD FLOODED!



HEDRICK FARM NORMALLY



HEDRICK FARM FLOODED!



DRY RUN (FOUR-WAY AT TROUT) NORMALLY



DRY RUN (FOUR-WAY AT TROUT) FLOODED!



PEMBROKE BRIDGE NORMALLY



PEMBROKE BRIDGE FLOODED!



McCOY SITE NORMALLY



McCOY SITE FLOODED!



HOW DID WE DO IT?

- Determined the participants
- Memorandum of understanding
- Surveyed the community
- Compiled the databases
- Secured the resources
- Made community aware of the plan

DETERMINING THE PARTICIPANTS

Ask yourself who will be needed to carry out your disaster plan.

- Fire Department – evacuation and security
- Rescue Squad – emergency treatment of victims
- Community Action – shelter of victims
- Food pantry – emergency food supply
- Clinic – additional hands for medical care

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

- Defines roles – including who will activate the response plan
- Includes duties of each organization
- Describes how one disassociates its organization or how the organization leaves the response team if it no longer wants to participate
- Includes call-down lists of each group
- Is signed by duly-elected representative of each group
- Delineates how planned will be reviewed/modified

SURVEYING THE COMMUNITY

- One-page survey developed and mailed to all in the district using mailing lists from all groups. Cost for doing this was shared. (School did copies, clinic did postage, all groups folded and stamped)
- Designed to determine folks with special needs (e.g. vents, home oxygen, bedridden, etc.)
- Designed to identify volunteers – including those with special skills
- Designed to identify resources people were willing to lend

DEVELOPING THE DATABASE

Once we received the surveys back, various databases were developed including:

- List of people with special needs
- List of those who needed a phone call just to check in
- List of people willing to volunteer
- List of people with special skills (this was determined by the individual himself/herself)
- List and location of resources people were willing to lend

AFTER YOU RECEIVE THE RESPONSES

WRITE A THANK YOU NOTE TO THE VOLUNTEER THAT DISCUSSES:

- What they agreed to do/lend
- How/when they will be activated (remind them that not all will be mobilized for every disaster – depending on their location/skill)
- What they need to do if their address changes or if they no longer want to participate as a volunteer
- A statement of any drill/practice you plan on having

SECURING THE RESOURCES

WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

- Space – where will you house people
- Utilities – how will you provide heat and light if there's no electricity. If you're doing it via generator, what fuel is needed, how/when will you get it, and where will you keep it?
- Food and Water – how/where will you get it and how much will you have on hand?
- What else will you need – cots, blankets, medical supplies, comfort kits, etc.

INFORMING THE COMMUNITY

ADVERTISE!

ADVERTISE!

ADVERTISE!

Mention it in all newsletters, other outreach campaigns,
and at local fairs and festivals.

Get your local newspaper, radio, and TV to do feature
articles about the availability of your services.

FIRST DISASTER RESPONSE

Though we had met many times and had organized or participated in drills, our first actual response didn't occur until 8 YEARS LATER!

By then, many people had forgotten us or newcomers didn't know anything about us.

STORM HITS!

On June 29, 2012, six states were devastated by a fast-moving wind storm called a “derecho”.

A derecho (pronounced “deh-REY-cho” in English) is a widespread, long-lived wind storm that is associated with a band of rapidly moving showers or thunderstorms. Although a derecho can produce destruction similar to that of a tornado, the damage is typically directed in one direction along a relatively straight swath. As a result, the term “straight-line wind damage” sometimes is used to describe derecho damage. By definition, a derecho’s damage swath extends more than 240 miles and includes wind gusts of at least 58 mph or greater along most of its length. This particular storm traveled 600 miles in about 10 hours. In our area, trees were uprooted, buildings were knocked over, and power lines and phone lines were wiped out.

SYNOPSIS OF RESPONSE

- Received a call from Greenbrier County Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency at 10:30 a.m. June 30, 2012 asking us to set up a shelter.
- Volunteers were at the shelter and beginning work by 11:00 a.m., despite no phone/power.
- Sheltered 14 people June 30, including 8 special-needs folks and 2 others who had special health-care needs.

SYNOPSIS CONTINUED

- Food was not a problem but drinks were. No stores were open in the county during the first few days, so the overnight shelter was closed after July 1.
- A massive feeding program began and continued for the next 12 days.

FEEDING PROGRAM

- Food was donated by community residents whose freezers were thawing, and people ate well. Meals included turkey, dressing, ham, mashed potatoes, beans, cornbread, fried potatoes, chicken and dumplings, spaghetti, bacon, eggs, French toast, biscuits and gravy and so much more!
- During the worst of the crisis, we were feeding between 200-250 people per day.

FEEDING PROGRAM CONTINUED

- Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) were delivered for the first time on Day 5, and the Red Cross began delivering meals to supplement on Day 6.
- A big concern involved feeding those working to restore services, and we fed many WV Department of Highways workers, National Guard members, and utility workers. Many of these workers reported that they hadn't had a hot meal in days.









A FEW NUMBERS

- 1687 people were fed in the feeding program during the 12 days with an average of 141 meals per day. Meals were delivered to the elderly and shut-ins in the area.
- More than 3080 volunteer hours were contributed by 59 community volunteers. An average of 28 people volunteered per day.
- An average of 42 people showered at the firehouse daily throughout the twelve-day ordeal
- In addition to water for human consumption, the fire department hauled thousands of gallons of water to local farmers for their livestock.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Don't rely on phones. We'd counted on losing power but not phones. Cell phones didn't work in our building.
- Our "cots" weren't adequate.
- Water is very important.
- Don't think that people will remember what to do. Continue to get the word out.
- Debriefings are important. We did them nightly to recap the day and plan the next day.
- A sense of humor is **EXTREMELY** important.



TWO MOST IMPORTANT THINGS WE LEARNED

1. It pays to plan.
2. We are truly fortunate to live in this community!



WART:

It's more than just an ugly blemish on
your skin!