



PATHFINDERS FULL-SCALE FIELD EXERCISE AFTER ACTION REPORT



Executive Summary

The Pathfinder Full-Scale Exercise was developed to test the capabilities of the Eagles' Wings Foundation and any other volunteer exercise participants, including especially local volunteers, in response to Local Emergency Management's taskings resulting from a severe weather event. The Exercise was conducted in conjunction with Nassau County's participation in the Florida 2008 Statewide Hurricane Exercise ("Herb") beginning Thursday, May 29, 2008 and concluding Friday, June 6, 2008.

The major objective for this exercise focused on the activation and coordination ability of the Eagles' Wings Foundation to organize a volunteer effort provided by local groups, Active Community Team Services (ACTS), affiliated organizations, and other volunteers to conduct needs assessments at the request of the Local Emergency Manager.

The next objective included recording data collected by personnel in the field, then, assimilating and reporting the data to the Local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for dissemination under the County's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

- Participate in the Nassau County Evacuation Plan for Transportation Dependent.
- Participate in a CERT-type, rapid damage assessment survey of neighborhoods.
- Provide for the collection of Disaster Welfare data at a respite shelter.
- Provide for the collection of Disaster Welfare and unmet special needs data in neighborhoods identified by Nassau County.
- Dispatch Special Needs squads to work to resolve unmet needs.
- Dispatch "hot shot" teams for special assignments tasked by Nassau County.

The major strengths identified during this exercise are as follows:

1. The Pathfinder Deployment Plan, including an Advanced Team, was validated.
2. The Incident Command System was utilized by the Incident Management Team (IMT) to organize, document and manage the Exercise.
3. All Pathfinder activities were conducted under the coordination of the Nassau County Emergency Operations Center.

4. Facilities established in response to the Exercise events, included an Incident Command Post, mobile Volunteer Receiving Center, and a mobile Information Technology Center.
5. The Pathfinder IMT trained, oriented, credentialed, and dispatched incoming volunteer responders.
6. 1,358 Survivor contacts forms were completed during the 2 hour Ops Period.
7. All data was provided and communicated to the Local EOC and forwarded to the State EOC in Excel, tabular and sortable format.
8. 1,698 Damage survey reports were completed and forwarded to the Local EOC which then was forwarded to those agencies responsible for addressing each issue.
9. PTF responded to perform “first pass debris” clearing at the local hospital.
10. Report of an injury in the field was addressed and resolved within 4 minutes of being reported by using geocoded, zoom, and tech features.

The primary areas for improvement are as follows:

- Improve coordination with the State GIS Officer to ensure the most recent geo-spatial data is available in a readily usable format immediately prior to entry.
- Data reporting forms should be even better tailored to the recipient.
- Improve coordination with local and regional volunteer organizations.
- Additional training and experience with incident management.
- Customize surveys to reflect the impacted community.
- Work closely with the local EOC to coordinate base facility and logistical needs.
- Focus more on accuracy of incoming Manifest registries from teams
- Work towards even more youth volunteers’ involvement in missions

Assisting and Cooperating Agencies for the Exercise:

- Nassau County Fire Rescue
- Nassau County Health
- Duval County Health
- State of Florida Department of Health
- Nassau County Human Resources
- UF IFIS Extension Office
- Amateur Radio Emergency Services
- American Red Cross – Duval Chapter
- Volunteer Florida
- State of Florida DEM, ESF 6, 15 & GIS
- Active Community Team Services
- Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN)

Background Information

The Pathfinder Full-Scale Exercise was developed to test the capabilities of the Eagles' Wings Foundation, ACTS, and other local volunteer exercise participants in response to Local Emergency Management's taskings resulting from a severe weather event. The process exercised by The Eagles Wings Foundation (EWF) and Active Community Team Services (ACTS) are included in the State of Florida, Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and coordinated by Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 – Volunteers and Donations.

The Exercise Planning Team was composed of Nassau County Emergency Management, the EWF, QUEST, ACTS, Florida Division of Emergency Management, the American Red Cross, and Disaster Solutions. This Full-Scale Exercise was conducted in conjunction with Nassau County's participation in the 2008 Statewide Hurricane Exercise (Hurricane Herb), which was conducted by the State of Florida beginning Thursday, May 29, 2008 and concluding Friday, June 6, 2008.

The Exercise Planning Team discussed the major objectives for this exercise, the first of which focused on the activation and coordination ability of the EWF to organize a volunteer effort provided by local groups, ACTS, affiliated organizations, and other volunteers to conduct needs assessments at the request of the Local Emergency Manager. Other major objectives included accurately recording data collected by personnel in the field, then, assimilating and reporting the data to the Local EOC for dissemination under the County's existing CEMP.

The Exercise Planning Team developed the exercise over the course of three months in such a way as to challenge participants in a scenario that would force major coordination efforts to successfully resolve each incident. The Exercise development also forced a close working relationship between agencies in the public, private, non-profit, and volunteer sectors – both local and out of area. The Exercise Plan would involve the personnel from the EWF in the role of a Type III Incident Management Team as coordination and support. Local volunteers, ACTS, affiliated organizations, and other volunteers provided the majority of operational resources ensuring a coordinated effort to meet the objectives enumerated by the Nassau County Emergency Manager. The mutual efforts of coordinating all of the organizations would be required to successfully address the challenges developed by the Exercise Planning Team.

Based on the Exercise Planning Team's deliberations, the following objectives were developed for the Pathfinders Full-Scale Exercise 2008:

Thursday, May 29, 2008

- Participate in the Nassau County Evacuation Plan for Transportation Dependent by collecting and sharing Disaster Welfare data between the hours of 0930 and 1200.

Monday, June 2, 2008

- Participate in a CERT type, rapid damage assessment survey of neighborhoods in Yulee, using windshield survey along with telephone data collection system between the hours of 1700 – 1800.

Tuesday, June 3, 2008

- Provide for the collection of Disaster Welfare data at a respite shelter opened by Nassau County between the hours of 0800 and 0900.
- Provide for the collection of Disaster Welfare and unmet special needs data in neighborhoods identified by Nassau County Emergency Management between the hours of 1100 and 1300.
- Dispatch Special Needs squads to work to resolve unmet needs between the hours of 1100 and 1300.
- Dispatch “hot shot” teams for special assignments tasked by Nassau County between the hours of 1100 and 1300.

The purpose of this report is to analyze exercise results, identify strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

Major Strengths and Accomplishments

The major strengths identified during this exercise are as follows:

1. The Pathfinder Deployment Plan was validated, including the “pre-strike” deployment of an Advance Team, followed by the full complement of a recognized Type III Incident Management Team.
2. The Incident Command System was utilized to document and communicate the Emergency Manager’s objectives to the Pathfinder Task Force Leader. The Task Force Leader was responsible for the completion of an Incident Action Plan that communicated the Emergency Manager’s Objectives, identified and assigned specific tactics that would be employed to meet those objectives, and identified and assigned specific support resource requirements for completing the objectives.
3. All Pathfinder (PTF) Operations and Support activities were documented and reported in National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) format, utilizing NIMS/ICS forms with only slight modifications to account for specific Pathfinder related items of information.
4. All Pathfinder activities were conducted under the coordination of the Nassau County Emergency Operations Center, which was staffed in accordance with its participation in the 2008 Statewide Hurricane Exercise.
5. Facilities established in response to the Exercise included an Incident Command Post, a mobile Volunteer Reception Center, and a mobile Information Technology Center.

6. The PTF IMT trained, oriented, and credentialed incoming volunteer responders. The IMT then dispatched door to door Strike Teams into neighborhoods with 5 Strike Teams, 1 Special Needs Strike Team, and 1 Hot Shot Team (Hot Shot teams are tasked to special assignments like here where the local EOC requested a volunteer team to be dispatched to do first pass, debris clearance of the County's only major hospital).
7. Collectively, these Teams completed 1,358 Survivor contacts forms during the 2-hour Operations Period. Based on census tract information of 2 people per household (normal at 2.6 per house), this survey is projected to have covered more than 2,500 homebound survivors, equaling over 1,250 survivors per hour.¹ PTF also uncovered 293 unmet special needs which were referred to Nassau County EOC, the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN), and the American Red Cross for follow up taskings by various appropriate agencies.
8. Aggregate human-related data collected by Operations personnel was further refined to allow for reporting needs based on human status conditions (survivor status), human comfort needs (food, water, etc.), and special medical needs (Special Needs). All data was provided and communicated to the Local EOC and forwarded to the State EOC in Excel, tabular and sortable format.
9. Aggregate property damage (Damage Survey) data collected by Operations Personnel was further refined to allow for reporting needs based on types of property damage. Damage survey reports were then forwarded to those responsible for addressing each issue, including sorting and re-tasking geocoded damage data such as major road blockages, downed power lines, or gas leaks.
10. PTF responded with one Hot Shot crew to a tasking from the local EOC to perform "first pass debris" clearing at the local hospital.
11. During the exercise, the Incident Command Post received word of a "real world" emergency that one of the Strike Team personnel conducting the roadway survey encountered a resident's dog and was bitten. Utilizing the Communications Plan, this individual was located within 60 seconds and her position identified on a map. This individual was contacted via telephone a minute later, and it was determined that she had scratched her knee in an attempt to avoid the dog but that she was not bitten.

¹ Due to the artificialities inherent in this type of exercise activity, it is acknowledged that survey time at each household would be somewhat longer in a real-world disaster, though, based on past disaster experiences with this Task Force, hundreds of back up volunteers would provide vital support for individual comfort aid for these homebound survivors, helping to keep the data collection process rapid.

Primary Areas for Improvement

Throughout the exercise, several opportunities for improvement in the Pathfinder response were observed and recorded. The primary areas for improvement, including recommendations, are as follows:

- Improve coordination with the State GIS Officer to ensure the most recent geo-spatial data is available in a readily usable format.
- Data reporting should be better tailored to the recipient. Due to artificialities presented by the Exercise participants, the State EOC received the data collected locally, but was not able to fully assimilate the information provided. Under actual conditions, information in such detail would only be reported to the Local EOC, then to CAN and The American Red Cross, and only summative information would be reported to the State EOC.
- Improve coordination with local and regional volunteer organizations.
- Customize surveys to reflect the impacted community.
- Work closely with the local EOC to coordinate base facility and logistical needs.
- Focus more on accuracy of incoming Manifest registries from teams
- Additional training and experience with the National Incident Management System, the Incident Command System and related documentation.
- Work towards even more youth volunteers' involvement in missions

Assisting and Cooperating Agencies

- Nassau County Fire Rescue – IT Support, Facilities, Medical,
- Nassau County Health
- Duval County Health
- State of Florida Department of Health
- Nassau County Human Resources
- UF IFIS Extension Office
- Amateur Radio Emergency Services
- American Red Cross – canteen
- Volunteer Florida
- State of Florida DEM, ESF 6, 15 & GIS
- Active Community Team Services (ACTS)
- Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN)