

PKS Hurricane Good Neighbor Program

By Tom King, CERT Civilian Leader

The Hurricane Good Neighbor Program (HGNP) was developed and is managed by the Pine Knoll Shores Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to determine in an expeditious manner who needs assistance after a hurricane passes.

Each year since its inception, the HGNP has attracted more and more participants and has been responsible for saving a life in the past.

During a hurricane, folks either leave Pine Knoll Shores or remain. The HGNP gives priority to those who stay and have registered in the program to determine their status after the hurricane passage. Those who participate will be given the highest priority in determining whether assistance is required at their household.

Those who do not participate will be at a higher risk and will have to wait until a random survey of the town is conducted by the police department. If needed, the town's CERT members will assist in this effort.

A notice of the activation time of the HGNP will be emailed to those on the town's email list and will be posted on the town's website (townofpks.com) and Facebook page. In addition, a notice will be given on the county's CodeRED system as noted below.

An activation time will be given, generally 48 hours prior to hurricane landfall (sooner if the 48 hours falls between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.). If you are staying in town and wish to participate in the HGNP, call 252-646-6506 between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. to contact a CERT representative. Outside these hours, please leave a voicemail with your name and phone number, and you will be contacted later.

The CERT representative will ask for the following information: name of the head of household, household address, list of all names and ages of those in the household remaining in town, the names of anyone in the home with special health considerations and their condition, a landline phone number, cell number(s), an off-island contact in case of an emergency (name and phone number), and the number of pets in the home and whether they are stranger friendly.

After the hurricane has passed, all those who participated will be called to determine the status of all in their household. If assistance is required, a team will be assigned to proceed to your location as soon as possible. Additionally, if we are unable to contact you, a team will be assigned to check your residence to determine the inhabitants' status.

If you register for the program and later decide to leave, *it is vital* that you advise CERT that you will be leaving, even if it is just a voicemail via 252-646-6506. This will keep a team from unnecessarily checking on your residence.

This program is *not* an incentive to remain on the island during a hurricane. Keep in mind that in the event of a Category 3 hurricane all public safety personnel will leave the island, and no one from public safety will be available to help you until after their return. *You will be staying on the island at your own risk.* Thank you for your participation in this important program.

CodeRED is a telephone communication service that allows Carteret County authorities to quickly notify the public (residents and visitors) about emergency

and health situations. To register, go to carteretcountync.gov, Services, Emergency Service and click CodeRED.

The Pine Knoll Shores Community Emergency Response Team always welcomes new people who desire to serve their community as members of CERT. For more information, please contact Tom King at 336-416-5184.

COVID-19, 2022 Version

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disappeared, and most people (especially young people) are behaving as if the pandemic were over.

I think that complacency is not appropriate at this juncture and that we should still pay attention to case numbers and reports from sources such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS). Masking remains somewhat controversial in terms of its effectiveness, and you do not need me to tell you that questions like whether to wear a mask or to get vaccinated are fraught with political ramifications.

Nevertheless, to me it seems prudent to determine one's behavior by making a risk assessment, and if an activity is high-risk, avoid it or at least wear a close-fitting mask and keep your distance from others to the extent possible. As an example, if case numbers are like they are today, people at increased risk of serious illness* would be wise to avoid large gatherings that are inside and to wear a mask when that's not possible.

It remains difficult for me to understand those who believe the vaccines are some nefarious plot to control us, or that they are otherwise not a good idea. Vaccination has saved lives, and the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) have been used for about 18 months now without evidence of widespread ill effects. In our medical practice, we have given close to 25,000 doses of mRNA vaccines, with the common side effects being sore arm, fatigue and low-grade fever. We have seen no major ill effects.

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself from serious illness from this virus, and the vaccines have proven over and over again to be safe and effective. Fortunately, they are widely available now. So, if you're not vaccinated, please get that way. If you are, get a booster. If you've had a booster and are old enough (50 and up) or at increased risk,* get a second booster.

We can continue to live almost normally, with the caveat that when case numbers are high, we need to take precautions.

*Risk factors for serious illness:

- Obesity
- Chronic kidney disease
- Pregnancy
- Cardiovascular disease
- COPD/other chronic lung disease/Asthma
- Conditions/medicines that lead to compromise of the immune system
- Sickle cell anemia