



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A regional response vehicle was used during an emergency exercise last month for area officials.

Groups train with hazmat gear

From Staff Reports

Ninety-one local emergency responders participated in a regional hazardous materials exercise on July 26 at the Crossroads Fire Department in Chowan County.

The purpose of the exercise was to give the responders hands on training in managing a hazardous materials incident and to insure their awareness of the resources available to them in the event of an incident.

The exercise was sponsored by the Chowan-Perquimans Local Emergen-

cy Planning Committee (LEPC) through a U.S. Department of Transportation grant. The responders came from six fire departments (Edenton, Cross Roads, Bethel, Belvedere, Durant's Neck and Inter-County), Chowan and Perquimans EMS, the Hertford Police Department, the Chowan County Sheriff's Office, Vidant/Chowan Hospital and Chowan and Perquimans Emergency Management.

Chief Craig Forlines of the Edenton Fire Department, the chairman, split them up into three working groups for the exercise. Each group rotated through

the three parts of the exercise, which included;

- A simulated truck accident involving hazardous materials. The responders had an opportunity to discuss their actions at an incident of this type and how they would manage the scene. They also got to set up Perquimans County's portable decontamination unit.

- A review of a State Medical Assistance Team trailer which has the capability of providing mass decontamination for larger hazardous materials incidents. The trailer is stationed in Pasquotank County.

HEARINGS

Continued from 1

planning board deals with aren't as big as the decision involving multi-million dollar wind power projects. In March, the board considered a case involving a grandfather who wanted to carve out a two-acre parcel to give to his grandson but on the surface the code didn't allow that.

During the moratorium the planning board did meet and on Dec. 8 a majority voted to recommend that the county increase the setback between the turbines and existing homes to one half mile (2,640 feet). The ordinance at the time and now set the defacto setback at 1,500 feet.

In favor of the vote were Brenda Lassiter, Donald Manley and Lewis Smith. Opposed was A.O. Roberts. Paul Kahl, the chairman, did not vote.

The planning board also recommended the county require Apex pay \$50,000 to set up a fund that the county could use if it needed outside experts to review the project. The board did not take up the issue of requiring the developer to guarantee that property values wouldn't decrease because the project was built.

In February, the county

commission resumed discussing the issue and in the end deadlocked in a 3-3 vote along political lines when it came to increasing the setback requirements. The commission did agree to require the developer set up the \$50,000 fund. The commission also asked Apex to address the issues of "blade drop" and "ice throw" when it came time to submit a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) request.

Blade drop is when for some reason a turbine blade might fly off. The issue was how far would it go. Ice drop concerns what would happen if ice formed on a turbine blade and was somehow thrown off.

After more two years of research Apex submitted a CUP request in May.

While the county's setback requirements weren't changed, 50 of the 57 turbines proposed by Apex for Perquimans County are a half mile (2,649 feet) or more from the nearest occupied building or residence, based on the CUP request. Twenty are a mile (5,280 feet) or more.

According to the CUP, the nearest home or building is 1,952 feet away from a wind turbine. There are four in Perquimans that are more than 9,000 feet away.

About 10,000 acres of the 16,000 acre project is owned by Weyerhaeuser, a timber company.

The planning board reviewed the CUP application in July and again earlier this month. In the end it concluded the application Apex submitted complied with the county's zoning rules.

Just one of the members voting -Lassiter - voted "no" to one of the four recommendations. It had to deal with if the project was in "harmony" with the area.

Lassiter said she's not opposed to wind energy in general, but she thinks it's too early to approve another project in Perquimans County. The Amazon Wind Farms East project is currently under construction and is set to be operational by December.

"Simply stated, I'd feel more confident if we see how the first project benefits us or negatively impacts us before we jump overboard into another project," Lassiter said. If you research wind energy and/or Apex, you will see negative issues which exists. I just don't want it to be too late for our county to be able to add conditions to the project to provide the citizens extra protection.

TEXT-2-911

Continued from 1

- The first text message to 9-1-1 should be brief and contain the location of the emergency and type of help needed.

- Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the Telecommunicator.

- Text in simple words - do not use abbreviations.

- Keep text messages brief and concise.

- Text location information is not equal to current location technology - GPS coordinates cannot be tracked while texting 9-1-1.

- 9-1-1 messages can take longer to receive, can get out of order or may not be received.

- Text-to-9-1-1 is not available if you are roaming.

- A text or data plan is required to text 9-1-1.

- If texting to 9-1-1 is not available in your area, or is temporarily unavailable, you will receive a message indi-

cating that texting 9-1-1 is not available and to contact 9-1-1 by other means.

- While texting 9-1-1, you cannot include more than one person (9-1-1) in the message. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1.

Staff at the 911 center was trained on the Text-to-911 service in March. Nixon said AT&T, Sprint, US Cellular and Verizon were all online with texting in July.

"T Mobile confirmed they had no network coverage in Perquimans County," Nixon said.

Nixon asks residents not to test the new system, but instead use it only in a real emergency.

"We do not recommend people place test 911 calls nor would we recommend sending a test text. It really is as simple as entering the three numbers 911 in the to

box and entering the request in the message box. Examples might be 'I need the police' or 'send an ambulance' or 'need fire department.'"

Nixon said the county started working on upgrading equipment in the 911 Center in Winfall in September by applying for funding.

The Text-to-911 service wouldn't have been possible without the \$315,000 grant the county recently received to upgrade the 911 system, but Nixon said the texting element represented a small part of that expense. The Text-2-911 is based on the 911 center's ability to get internet service. Right now the center just has one internet provider, but Nixon said he's working to get a second one.

"Were going to get redundancy," he said. One of the services will rely on a T-1 phone line while the other would use a fiber optic line.

The money to create the texting service comes from a surcharge phone all customers pay every month to fund 911 services. The fund is administered by a state agency.

"The goal of the North Carolina 911 Board is to provide the same level of 911 service across North Carolina, from Murphy to Manteo," said Richard Taylor, the executive director of the NC 911 Board.

"The deployment of text-to-911 in Perquimans County is a another step in reaching that goal. Our citizens communicate with a variety of technologies and it's awesome to see Perquimans' 911 Center rising to the challenge for their residents."

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FUNDS

Continued from 1

will also be able to expand storage space on the lower level of the two-story building to provide safe access and create office space that is adequate and secure.

Sandy Stevenson, a PCRA member working on the renovation plan, said the group hopes to be able to start construction this fall and be complete by next April when the new season starts.

The current building is about 3,500 square feet. The addition will measure about 800 square feet.

"It will really give a more effective space for our exhibits," Stevenson said.

Getting heavy things down to the first floor is a safety issue, both men say.

"When you going upstairs, it's not safe," McMullan said.

One couple - Catherine and the late William Nixon - have been instrumental in funding the Newbold-White project, McMullan said.

"When they were younger, they were very active and their children have been supportive," he said.

Donors for this latest phase of restoration will be honored in a special memorial section of the visitor's center.

The historic home is currently open on Thursday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Donations can be mailed to the PCRA at P.O. Box 151, Hertford, NC, 27944. The phone number of the visitor's center is 426-7567.