

First Selectman's Monthly Letter for August, 2012

Over the course of two days at the end of July, Beacon Falls participated in a statewide storm preparation exercise. Our EOC (Emergency Operation Center) was open both days, staffed with our CL&P liaison, the Valley Health Department liaison and our local emergency management team. This joint exercise was triggered by last year's active storm season, punctuated by Irene and Albert pounding our area. Lessons learned through those trying days will enable us to respond more effectively to future storms. Experts warn of the real possibility of a Category 3 hurricane hitting Connecticut; the last such storm occurred in 1938.

The participants engaged in a very realistic, and frankly, frightening, exercise. The scenario presented was that of a Category 3 storm coming up the coast and hitting landfall. In the event of such a Cat 3, everything within 2 miles of the coast is leveled, from New Haven to Old Saybrook. The team was called upon to address, among other things, a 25,000 gallon backup of raw sewage on Main Street, due to the washing out of the waste treatment plant. Another crisis was the loss of the designated emergency shelter, Woodland Regional High School; first of power and then of the building entirely. An F-4 tornado ravaged Windsor Locks and Bradley airport, further isolating the immediate geographic area from the rest of the country. Throughout the duration of the imaginary storm, a broad spectrum of crises was generated, the magnitude and intensity of which evolved relentlessly.

Preparation is the key to surviving such a storm. To ensure self-sufficiency, please assemble supplies to last through several days of power loss. Include food, manual can opener, and 2-3 gallons of fresh water per person/day. Have a radio and flashlight ready with fresh batteries; think about medications, necessary paper products, diapers, pet food, etc. Consider purchasing a generator and hire a professional to connect it to your home. Become acquainted with your neighbors and discuss your plans with them. Remember that our town shelters are not equipped to take in pets. If you find a shelter for your pets, be sure to have a carrier for each animal. *Never* touch a tree or vehicle that is in contact with an electrical wire, because even if the power is out, that wire may still have juice, and you can be electrocuted. If asked to evacuate your home, please do.

The scenarios described in the exercise were realistic, and they have been experienced by fellow Americans across the nation. Remember, although every effort will be made by town leadership to protect you and your family, in the event of a disaster, ultimately *you* are responsible for you. Contact my office to arrange a home visit by representatives of our emergency management team for further tips and advice.

The town wide communication system, Code Red, is reserved for emergencies; it will be used as often as necessary in these situations. If you are currently subscribed, you need do nothing. If not, sign up at www.beaconfalls-ct.org; registration must be done online.

On a brighter note: *Family Day*, capped off with a spectacular fireworks display, was enjoyed by young and old alike, and we thank Joe Rodorigo and his team at Park and Rec for a terrific day of fun and celebration.

And finally, the Streetscape underwent its first semi-final inspection on July 20.

Following completion of final details by the contractor, the target date for transferal to the town is August 15; an opening ceremony is planned for the end of the month.

Enjoy the rest of summer, and stay cool!

Sincerely, Gerard Smith