

Training Exercise Simulates Hurricane Landfall

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The North Carolina Wing (NCWG) of Civil Air Patrol (CAP) conducted a statewide Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX) from July 16-21. The weeklong exercise began with days of planning and preparation and culminated in a weekend of actual and notional taskings. The SAREX scenario focused on after-storm damage assessment, missing persons and missing aircraft training.

The exercise was overseen by Capt. Scott Stevens, the NCWG's director of emergency services (DOS), and his adviser, Lt. Col. John May, former NCWG DOS. Approximately 100 NCWG members participated in the SAREX.

The scenario for the exercise was the simulated landfall of Hurricane Gabrielle near Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, as a Category 4 storm. The storm was downgraded to a tropical storm, but damage was assumed to be widespread along the North Carolina and South Carolina coastlines. Because the landfall was sooner than predicted, large numbers of people were unable to evacuate in advance. Despite the timing, the NCWG was able to aid the N.C. Highway Patrol with route surveys along evacuation routes.



Many residents in the eastern part of North Carolina were assumed to be without power (including NCWG headquarters in Burlington) and flooding was extensive. In the wake of the storm, the NCWG was tasked to assist with damage assessments and search and rescue missions. NCWG members involved in the SAREX did not know any of the scenarios beforehand.

Because of the simulated flooding at NCWG headquarters, a temporary, remote Incident Command Post (ICP) was set up at Pope Army Airfield in Cumberland County near the disaster area, and communications were established for air and ground sorties.

During the SAREX, the NCWG flew 13 air sorties, with several additional air sorties cancelled or rescheduled due to inclement weather. The air sorties were flown statewide from Asheville to Southport and more than 150 AP infrastructure targets were requested to be photographed by simulated outside agencies.

Three ground sorties were tasked as part of the exercise, including two missing person searches and one missing aircraft (ELT) search. All three ground sorties were successful and the missing persons and aircraft were located.

Personnel support for the SAREX came from around the Wing. Special thanks go out to all the incident commanders and to Col. Jayson Altieri, vice chair of the CAP Board of Governors, who drove in to serve as the SAREX's ground branch director.

In summarizing the SAREX, NCWG vice commander, Lt. Col. Ed Angelovich stated, "With the hi-ops temp of the training over the weekend along with some non-cooperating weather across our state on Saturday, we were able to successfully demonstrate our readiness and skill to respond and deliver what our scenarios and customers requested of us. The NCWG team did it professionally with no reported safety related mishaps or incidents. What an excellent training experience for all who participated."