

Community Watch
Co-chairmen John Harding and Jim Morrison
by Marilyn Hughes

Our Greenbrier Community was honored to have **Wes Goforth** our neighbor and Chief Anchor for WCTI News Channel 12 along with Les Still, Channel 12 meteorologist attended our Community Watch Meeting on October 27, 2014. A record crowd of 35 residents turned out to hear the presentation on Hurricane Preparedness and how News Channel 12 responds to various weather emergencies to keep citizens informed. Preparations start long before the actual event. Live units are dispatched to various locations around the county to monitor the storm. Hurricane Irene was a real eye-opener and it set a new reference point for all future storm coverage. A new method of reporting came in the form of a "Wall to Wall Wheel" as Channel 12 calls it. It's based on 60-minute cycle and breaks down all phases of the broadcast. For example, the first five minutes on the Weather Wall is an explanation and facts of the event. Secondly, would come live reports from various parts of the county, call-ins, weather center report, live reports and updates. The second half hour would mirror the first.

Irene set a new benchmark for 66+ hours of continuous coverage. It was all hands on deck for long periods. The most important information to viewers on the day the storm is to arrive is the weather. At that point, there are no commercials during the storm. The possibility of getting commercials lost during continuous coverage rescheduled would depend on future vacant ad time available. Of course, every station monitors each other for viewership thru a computer program called Rentrak. It monitors ratings and airtime. Wes went on to explain when there are power outages they rely on Face book and other social media to communicate storm reports.

Les Still elaborated on storm surge and explained why most casualties occur at this point. Storm surges are affected by two factors: Long fetch of winds spiraling toward the storm and a low-pressure dome of water drawn up and trailing the storm's center. Les also presented a very informative power point presentation on how storms form and their characteristics. Katrina did 100 billion dollars in damage with 30' wave surges, the highest ever recorded. Katrina was a Category 5 storm and as most category 5 storms, Katrina, Sandy and Irene's names were retired, never be used again. Actually, hurricanes are not named, tropical storms are (39 mph) and when they reach 74mph, they become hurricanes. Hurricanes are rated according to intensity on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale.

After WWII, hurricanes were named after wives, men, then by alphabet. In 1979 named storms alternated male/female, then believe it or not, baby books. Other than retired storms, the names can be repeated every six years.

New Bern Police Department guests were Sergeant Maria Bowen-Perry, Lt. Mark VonBehren, Capt. John West and Police Officer Keith Hurley were on hand to explain the Police role in emergencies. Sgt. Bowen-Perry a 26-year veteran and is our supervisor (along with Lt.VonBehren) for Greenleaf our Community Policing District, presented an overview of how

the Police Department interacts with all phases of emergency preparedness. An emergency operations command is set up consisting of the chief of police, mayor, city manager, public information officer, emergency services, parks and recreation, electric company, fire department and members of the police department. All emergency services coordinate with each other and are dispatched as needed. Also at their disposal if needed is the National Guard who assists in setting up emergency shelters for citizens. Sgt. Perry-Bowen also spoke about a national program called "Coffee with a Cop" which offers a unique opportunity for community members to ask questions and learn more about the ways in which the NBPD has an impact. For more information, contact Officer Paul Brown 252-672-4247.

The meeting concluded with John Harding and Jim Morrison presenting Certificates of Appreciation to WCTI-News Channel 12 and the NBPD for their ongoing support of the Greenbrier Community.