



PMKCA October Newsletter, Part 1



A flooding storm at the end of 2013 undermined a road culvert and swallowed a truck and driver on Pohakea Mauka Rd. CERT helped in this emergency.

Pa'auilo's CERT Team needs our Support!

***Join CERT and help your community in an
emergency.***

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Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) were created as a formal program by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. PMKCA actively supports our local CERT team by publicizing CERT activities and encouraging our members and friends to participate. On the Big Island, the program is managed by our Hawaii County Civil Defense Agency. The basic concept is that trained community members are good “boots on the ground” (because they know the area and their neighbors), and thus are best-suited to:

- Assist in the recovery stages of an event when normal emergency responders may be overloaded and unavailable;
- Provide locally-specific information about injuries and damages to Civil Defense so that County help can be provided.

Seven possible major emergency events for Hamakua are:

- Hurricanes or other high wind conditions;
- Wildfires;
- Heavy rain with flooding;
- Earthquake with structure collapse or roadway breach;
- Landslide, mudslide or rockfall;
- Hazardous materials release;

- Tsunami lowland flooding.

Of these seven, at our PMKCA elevation we're not worried about tsunamis. And there is no known large storage of hazardous materials in our area, although plenty of gasoline, diesel and propane trucks pass by below us on the highway. The remaining five events have various degrees of probability of happening, and various degrees of severity if they do happen. We've had a few examples:

- Ten years ago, a culvert/bridge collapse in a flooding event cut off vehicle access to Pohakea Mauka Road, Manienie Road and Pohakealani Road, impacting residents' travel for over a week. Since then, the bridge over the gulch at the bottom of Ka'apahu Road has been overtopped a couple of times by flooding, although it remained intact.
- Nine years ago, winds from Hurricane Iselle mainly caused damage in Puna and Ka'u, but here dropped trees on power lines and their roots pulled up water lines on Pohakea Road. Many residents above Pohakea Road were without power or water for at least 5 days.
- Two years ago, a wildfire that began in the eucalyptus grove just east of Pa'auilo was wind-driven uphill in the area of Pohakea Road before it was contained. One year ago, a smaller one followed in a nearby location.

And not in our immediate area, but a stark reminder anyway... the recent high winds that drove wildfires through Lahaina on Maui on August 8 also drove several fires in North Kohala. Fortunately, those in Kohala were contained. Here, the winds were not quite as bad – 25 mph gusting to 40 – but still lively enough to spread a fire very fast if one had started.

For any of these five possible events for our area, CERT would react to the degree that our resources permit:

- If there is some advance warning, like damaging winds or flooding from a hurricane or a Kona Low, we would get the word out to PMKCA members on how it looks like it may play out here locally, and what is suggested in advance of its arrival. Then to the degree possible, monitor and report on it while it's going on, and assess injuries and damages afterwards.
- If there's some warning, like a developing wildfire, we'd try to spread the word as quickly as possible through affected neighborhoods, monitor the conditions from a safe distance, and help with evacuations as needed.
- If there's no warning, such as a major earthquake near our area, we would do reconnaissance after the shaking stops to see where major problems like house or road collapses have occurred.
- In any of those five events, we'd be there to help out with first aid for injuries, search and rescue for victims, and assessment and reporting of damages to Civil Defense.

CERT training covers these activities, and though it doesn't make us experts in any sense, it allows us to be useful in situations where the normal emergency responders get overwhelmed. So basically, that's our CERT mission.

But... currently, we're too short-handed to effectively fulfill that mission. Over the past several years since Covid, five members have gone back to the mainland. Another five have withdrawn due to age concerns about physical capability. We're down to five active members. ***We really need an infusion of new members to meet the needs of our PMKCA community.***

Becoming a CERT member is not difficult; it requires home study of training materials and absorption of basic concepts, self-paced. After passing a test on that, you would need to give up one weekend (8 hours of training each day) to do hands-on training at a Civil Defense site. You don't need to be built like Schwarzenegger to carry out a victim under each arm, nor do you need any special talents; CERT members typically define roles they individually are comfortable with.

If you have an interest in serving your community in this way, to get further information please contact Denning Powell at 808-776-1935 or email powelldenning@hotmail.com. Also, see the brief synopsis on our website at [CERT | PMKCA](#) that gives a good general sense of what we do for the community.