

★
CENTRAL AREA
Disaster Preparedness Newsletter

PREPAREDNESS



RESPONSE



RECOVERY

*Building Resilient Posts Before Disaster Strikes***August 2026**

Serving Through the Storm: Lessons from 1928

As hurricane season continues across Florida, preparedness often focuses on supplies, evacuation routes, weather forecasts, and emergency plans. Those are all essential. But one of the most valuable preparedness resources we have is often overlooked—our own history.

Nearly a century ago, one of Florida's deadliest hurricanes devastated communities along the state's southeast coast. In September 1928, the Department Commander of The American Legion issued a statewide appeal for assistance. Gordon M. Crothers Post 15 in Dade City answered that call without hesitation.

The Post approved an initial \$50 contribution to hurricane relief and soon followed with another \$50, providing a total of \$100 to support recovery efforts. More importantly, members didn't stop with financial assistance. Legionnaires traveled by automobile from Dade City into the disaster area to assist with relief operations, working alongside the American Red Cross and local officials. As recovery continued, additional fundraising efforts—including a community boxing benefit—helped provide ongoing support for those affected.

The equipment, technology, and communications available in 1928 bear little resemblance to what we have today. Yet the response of those Legionnaires reminds us that the foundations of effective disaster preparedness have remained remarkably consistent.

Could Your Post Answer the Call Today?

Take five minutes at your next meeting to discuss these questions:

- ☐ Do we have a current emergency contact list?
- ☐ Do we know who will coordinate volunteers?
- ☐ Do we have a written disaster response plan?
- ☐ Do we know our county emergency management contacts?
- ☐ Have we identified members with special skills or equipment?

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Lesson 1: Preparation Begins Before the Emergency

When the call for assistance came, Post 15 was able to respond because it already had an organized membership, capable leadership, and a commitment to service.

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Every Post should ask:

- Do we have an up-to-date emergency contact list?
- Who would coordinate volunteers if our community needed assistance?
- Do we have a written plan for how our Post will respond before, during, and after a disaster?
- Have we discussed our role before a disaster occurs?

Preparation is more than assembling supplies—it's organizing people.

Lesson 2: Partnerships Multiply Our Impact

The 1928 response brought together The American Legion, the American Red Cross, and local government. No organization worked alone.

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Successful disaster response depends on relationships established long before hurricane season. Every Post should know:

- Who serves as the local emergency management director?
- How can we support—not duplicate—the efforts of community partners?

- What resources can our Post realistically provide?

Strong partnerships make every organization more effective.

Lesson 3: Recovery Doesn't End When the Storm Passes

The initial donations and volunteer deployment were only the beginning. The Post continued supporting relief efforts through additional fundraising after the immediate crisis had passed.

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Recovery often lasts weeks or months.

Consider how your Post can:

- Check on members after the storm.
- Support veterans facing prolonged hardships.
- Assist community recovery efforts as immediate response transitions into long-term recovery.

The greatest needs often emerge after the headlines fade.

Lesson 4: Service Is the Legion's Greatest Resource

The most important asset deployed in 1928 wasn't equipment—it was Legionnaires willing to serve.

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If your Post does not currently have a disaster plan, a template is available that can be adapted to meet your needs. This resource includes member accountability procedures, volunteer roles, and response guidance.

To request a copy, please email:
rmcgregor.wk@gmail.com

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Every Post has members with valuable skills and experience. Identifying those talents before disaster strikes can make all the difference. Whether it's communications, logistics, first aid, transportation, food service, or simply checking on fellow veterans, every member has a role to play.

Looking Forward

The story of the 1928 hurricane isn't simply part of Post 15's history. It's a reminder that preparedness has always been about more than weather forecasts and emergency kits. It's about building organizations that are ready to answer the call when their communities need them most.

Every American Legion Post has its own story of service during difficult times. Some responded to hurricanes. Others supported wildfire relief, tornado recovery, floods, or community emergencies. Those stories deserve to be remembered—not only to honor those who served, but because they still have something to teach us.

Nearly a century ago, Legionnaires from a small Florida Post answered a call for help without hesitation. Their example reminds us that preparedness is measured not only by what we store before a storm, but by how ready we are to serve after it.

The question for every Post today is the same: If our predecessors answered the call then, are we ready to answer it now?

