

Navy-Marine Corps MARS Assists with Civil Air Patrol Exercise
Oregon Civil Air Patrol - 04/25/09

While Oregon Military, Federal Armed Services and some state officials conducted a mock exercise today, Civil Air Patrol pilots and air crews took to the sky above Oregon to photograph roads, bridges and tunnels as part of the Cascadia Peril 09 disaster response exercise.

Capt. Mark Kemner carefully prepares his aircraft for departure on a "sortie" or individual flight mission.



CAP Cadet radio operators C/Amn Cully Keene and C/SMSGT Matthew Brookshile maintained close radio contact with all aircraft during their flight missions.



Civil Air Patrol (CAP), the volunteer auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, put five Cessna aircraft into service out of Brookings, Medford, Salem, Hillsboro and Aurora conducting photo missions as if a 9.0 magnitude earthquake occurred off the Oregon coast resulting in a tsunami and shifting of the plates underneath Oregon.

High resolution digital photos provide clear detailed images of critical infrastructure locations including highways, dams, power lines and bridges.



If such an earthquake were to strike near here, experts say the tsunami would race up the Columbia River with enough power to strike Bonneville Dam with an 8-foot-high wave, and that's after traveling the 100 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Damage would occur to many things, but one of the first things state and federal officials will want to check would be roads, bridges and tunnels on roadways. In order to get medical services, clean water and food to stricken areas, emergency service providers would need to know how to transport these items and services.

Representatives of the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, the Oregon Department of Human Services and the Oregon Department of Transportation traveled with CAP air crews Saturday so they could see first-hand the benefit of flying over Oregon to assess potential damage.

Multnomah County Sheriff Lt. Mary Lindstrand checks in with CAP observer, Lt. Joe Breniser prior to departure on a governmental support flight.

Each aircrew contains at least a pilot and an observer. When they are not transporting a local, state or federal official, CAP crews also include a scanner, allowing the non-pilot members to constantly scan the ground on both sides of the aircraft.



CAP members train for search and rescue and disaster response through at least six exercises a year. Once a year the efforts are either coached or graded by the U.S. Air Force. Volunteers of CAP train through evening classes, weekend training sessions or on-line study courses to ensure they are up to date on the latest Federal Emergency Management Administration standards.

Tasked by the U.S. Air Force, CAP aircrews conduct more than 90 percent of all searches for missing and downed aircraft in the continental United States. Adults and cadets in Civil Air Patrol staff ground teams and aircrews to search and assist. They are often called in on other searches by county sheriffs and state officials.

Randy Hayden, Director of the Oregon Navy-Marine Corps MARS program. The organization was able to provide crucial assistance during the exercise for the transmission and receipt of text messaging capability over digital HF radio frequencies. Such capability, called PACKET, or "email over the radio" is one of the few systems capable of operating reliably regardless of power and normal communications systems being down or overwhelmed in time of disaster.

