

San Juan County



Department of Emergency Management

DISASTER!

Now what?

Obviously the chances of an earthquake, wildfire, winter storm, or other calamity happening to the islands on any given day are extremely low. But, eventually it will happen, and without a little bit of preparation the impact will be even more severe.

This handout will try to talk you through some of the simplest keys to not only surviving a disaster, but rebounding from one better and stronger than ever.

FIRST...Take stock of your situation:

- Are you and your family safe? Can you keep yourselves warm, fed, and out of harm's way?
- Remember, being prepared for a disaster is part of your basic responsibility as an islander. If you've been caught unprepared, this will be more of a challenge than if you're self-sufficient.
- If you're OK, is there a way to let off-island family and loved ones know that you're safe? Do you have a pre-determined out of state contact?
- If you are facing a true emergency and need help immediately, and assuming 911 is not functioning, one of the many fire stations that are scattered across the islands should be your first stop for help. Remember to be patient and that help might be some time in coming, but eventually these stations will become the hubs in a County wide network of support.
- If you are OK, please a GREEN sign that says "OK" on your door or end of driveway. If you need help, a RED sign that says "HELP" should be posted.

SECOND...Some basic things to keep in mind:

- You're going to be on your own for a while. Local public services will be overwhelmed and you should only look to them for help in true life or death emergencies. Don't call 911 to ask for information, report power outages, or to pass on info that isn't life or death in nature.
- Disasters bring out the best and the worst in people. Be patient with those who don't respond well, and work hard to ensure your own response is positive and constructive. It sounds odd, but finding your sense of humor does a lot to help the recovery.
- A disaster is an opportunity. It is a chance to make a difference in the community, and a chance to rebuild things better than ever. The communities that recover quickest are the ones that truly embrace this attitude.
- After a disaster, there's a natural tendency to blame someone for the event. Remember, usually disasters are no one's fault, and are an unavoidable part of simply living in our world. Focus on the things we can control: helping our community heal, staying positive, and moving forward.

THIRD...Now it's time to start helping others:

- Everyone has a role in response and recovery. Start with your neighbors. Are they OK, is there anything you can do help them out?
- It is best to coordinate efforts to pitch in through your neighborhood or an existing organization: your church, a service agency, your business, or other group. Join the Red Cross today, and you'll have an easy way to get involved after an actual disaster.
- There's a lot of adrenaline flowing after a disaster. Don't be afraid to take a deep breath or two, and take stock of the situation. In the rush to help, well intentioned people moving too fast can end up causing more confusion or danger.
- Take time to take care of yourself. Sleep is vital and occasionally stepping back from the urgency of the response helps ensure you'll be healthy and available for the long term.
- Respect the fact that it may take a while for a community to make use of all of the help offered. Don't get frustrated if your assistance isn't immediately accepted.

For help with getting prepared contact:

Department of Emergency Management
360-370-7612 / www.sanjuandem.net

