
San Juan County Sheriff's Office



Department of Emergency Management

NEIGHBORHOOD PREPARATION

Individual preparedness is the first step to being ready for a natural disaster. Step two is building a simple system to help your neighborhood respond. It isn't hard to do. Outlined here is a three year program, based on just one meeting a year, and a bit of work on the side.

YEAR ONE

- A. Organize** a neighborhood meeting.
- B. Prepare** a map of your neighborhood that plots out the locations of all propane/natural gas turn-off valves, and also identifies the location of vulnerable residents (defined as the elderly, the disabled, and children).
- C. Discuss** with your neighbors the nine critical steps to follow in the first hour after a major emergency:
 - 1. Are we safe?-** Check on your loved ones. Think through possible follow up effects: tsunami, after-shocks, downed lines, etc.
 - 2. Clothing-** Dress for safety. Stay warm, stay dry.
 - 3. Utilities-** Turn off propane/gas valves.
 - 4. Water Conservation-** Shut off water valve- Save the water inside the hot water heater for future use.
 - 5. Communication-** Place a communication card in your house window to show your family's condition- a card with **OK** written on one side and **HELP** written on the backside.
 - 6. Fire Protection-** Place your fire extinguishers outside your house, in a good line-of-sight location, so that the equipment can be used to put out fires in the neighborhood.

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7. Gather- Residents go to a predetermined location in the neighborhood, preferably a covered area, to meet your fellow neighbors. This location is chosen during the first meeting.

8. Inventory- From this spot, people go and do the following tasks: 1. check on the vulnerable residents, 2. provide basic first aid, 3. turn off any remaining gas valves, and 4. note any other obvious damage (water tanks, downed trees, culverts, etc.).

9. Report- After completing these basic tasks, everyone should return to the meeting place and report back to the group on any situations they have found. A single representative should be sent with this information to local fire station (if safe to travel).

YEAR TWO

At the next neighborhood meeting, the group should establish and assign residents to the following response teams:

- 1. Safety team-** This team will be responsible for shutting off gas valves, and giving basic first aid.
- 2. Light Search and Rescue Team-** This team will go door to door and check on the welfare of the residents.
- 3. Care Team-** This team will take care of the elderly, disabled, and the children.

In addition at the meeting, the group will also review basic disaster scenarios focusing on which teams go where and what they do. These simulations empower the residents and help to develop critical thinking about disaster response.

YEAR THREE

In the 3rd year, the purpose of the meeting is primarily to practice drills, update the plotted map, and to re-acquaint people and new residents with the emergency plan. Enrichment activities can also be provided to teach residents new skills.

For help with organizing contact:

**Department of Emergency Management
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