



San Juan County Sheriff's Office

Department of Emergency Management

Internet Resources:

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS for the OUTER ISLANDS

Living on, working at, or visiting one of San Juan County's non-ferry served islands is a unique and rewarding experience. But that sense of peace and distance from the world comes with an important distinction from other communities: in the event of an emergency, help may be a long time in coming. The more you can do locally to be prepared, the better off you'll be.

4 Steps to Increase Your Preparedness:

- Maintain a minimum of a 10 day supply of food, water, and fuel.
- Own a basic first aid kit and have the training to use it properly.
- Own a portable alert radio with specific area message encoding capability ("SAME").
- Understand what you can do to minimize wildland fire and structure fire risk, and have a well rehearsed plan for what to do should one start.

What More Can You Do?

- Work with the Department of Emergency Management to develop an island emergency response plan for your island.
- Continue to develop and improve local capabilities for your island. This could include basic first aid or fire training for residents, or the creation of a basic fire service with surplus equipment.
- Improving access to your island through the creation and identification of boat, plane, and helicopter landing areas will increase your options during an emergency.
- Organize and educate your neighbors. Ensuring that the whole island has a clear understanding of what help is available, both on-island and off, will go a long way towards improving response.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What about law enforcement issues, will the Sheriff respond?

A: Yes, the Sheriff is funded through the County's general tax fund, and has responsibility for all of the islands. Sheriff's Office personnel will most likely be responding in a boat from Friday Harbor, though both planes and boats coming from Orcas and Lopez have been used in the past.

Q: If my house is on fire, who will help put it out?

A: None of the outer islands are currently served by an official (i.e. taxed) fire district. Some of the outer islands have their own homegrown fire teams that may be available to assist. Do call 911 immediately, as there may be available local resources willing to volunteer to assist.

Q: Can I call Airlift Northwest directly to request a helicopter evacuation?

A: Yes, but whenever possible, it makes sense to call 911 first. San Juan County Dispatch can activate Airlift Northwest, and can help to coordinate the response with other local agencies.

Q: What about a wildland fire? Who will respond?

A: Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has responsibility for protecting the state's forests. If there is a wildland fire on your island, call 911, who will in turn report it to DNR. DNR may request assistance from local fire departments, or they may dispatch their own resources. Keep in mind that it may be difficult to transport personnel and equipment to the scene in time to prevent a large and fast growing fire from spreading.

Realities of Outer Island Life:

- There won't be the same emergency response that you'd expect on the larger islands. Response will likely take longer and be less well equipped than on a ferry served island.
- Any potential response may be severely affected by weather, tides, and other demands upon local resources.
- Much of the success or failure of an emergency response will fall on the shoulders of you and your neighbors.
- Islanders with special medical conditions need to recognize that living on an outer island poses a set of challenges different from elsewhere.
- Outer island life and the sacrifices it requires may not be for everyone.
- Recognize that spending time on an outer island is like going back in time. Preparation, self-reliance, common-sense, and cool thinking will be your most useful tools during an emergency.

ALWAYS CALL 911 FOR ASSISTANCE IN ANY EMERGENCY.

For More Information:

Please contact the San Juan County Department of Emergency Management:
Telephone: **360-378-9932** or Email: **dem@sanjuandem.net**

The San Juan County Department of Emergency Management website features a wide array of preparedness materials, frequently asked questions, and other resources. Please visit us at:

www.sanjuandem.net



There's a fine line between preparation and panic, between caution and worry. The San Juan County Department of Emergency Management wants to encourage residents of our outer islands to be ready, but not fearful. A few simple steps and some regular planning will go a long ways towards preventing and recovering from a wide range of emergencies.

Whether you're on an outer island for a day or month or a decade, it is an adventure. Many residents are well equipped for any number of unforeseen surprises that only heighten that adventure. For those who aren't ready, now is the time.

ALWAYS CALL 911 FOR ASSISTANCE IN ANY EMERGENCY.