

NEIGHBORHOOD PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM (NPP) ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDE FOR DISASTER AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Sarasota County Emergency Management
1660 Ringling Blvd 6th Floor
Sarasota, FL 34236
941-861-5000

<http://allhazards.scgov.net/Home.aspx>

*The information contained herein is intended to serve as an example of how to effectively organize neighborhoods to be better prepared for all types of emergencies and disasters. This information has been compiled from a variety of sources and is intended only as a guide. Citizen Corps and its collaborative partners actively promote the importance of neighborhood preparedness; however it is up to each neighborhood and individual therein to determine their own capabilities and willingness to participate in an organized preparedness plan. Every neighborhood is a unique community. Using this information as a guide, neighborhood members are encouraged to tailor their own plan to meet their specific needs. Citizen Corps and its collaborative partners assumes no responsibility for the actions of any who choose to participate in this program nor for any damages arising from those actions. Individuals acting in times of disaster are offered certain protection by Florida Statutes **768.13** and **768.1355***

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Overview

Hurricane preparedness and education campaigns have consistently stressed the importance of individual and family self-sufficiency for a period of no less than three days to one week following a disaster or major emergency. During this period the police, fire and emergency medical services responders will likely be overwhelmed and unable to meet the demand for emergency assistance. An organized and structured Neighborhood Preparedness Program (NPP) can be very effective in meeting the critical first needs of participating community members. Those involved in the development of this program seek to encourage every neighborhood, either through established neighborhood associations, churches, Neighborhood Watch groups or other organized entities, to become dedicated to the implementation of a structured preparedness program.

Program Goals

The goal of the NPP is to ensure neighborhood self-sufficiency for a period of three to seven days following a hurricane or other significant event. This will be accomplished by organizing into units of 25 to 50 households, each led by a Neighborhood Disaster Team. Each team member will be assigned specific duties and responsibilities, will be assisted by neighborhood volunteers and will meet with other team members on a regular basis.

Organization/Structure Progression Guide

Local Neighborhood forms neighborhood Disaster Committee, which includes a Chairperson and other neighborhood members who develop a Neighborhood Disaster Plan, which includes a Neighborhood Coordinator, who oversees Neighborhood Liaisons and Neighborhood Teams.

Organized Neighborhoods form the basis for a Community Disaster Council which includes a Chairperson and representatives from neighborhoods, local government, community agencies, etc. who develop a Community Disaster Plan which includes Community Coordinators, Liaisons, and Teams/Divisions.

Local Government/Fire Departments develop a Disaster Plan which utilizes Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS), which centers authority in an Incident Commander who oversees Divisions, which include preparedness, response and recovery operations.

Using This Guide

Welcome !!

This guide was designed to help you organize your neighborhood, using resources in your community, while avoiding the usual pitfalls and/or reinventing the wheel.

As you use this Guide and develop new or adapted materials for neighborhoods or volunteers, please send a sample to the Sarasota County Emergency Management Office at 1660 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota, FL 34236. Let us know how we can help you prepare.

Some Helpful Definitions

(It might help to refer to previous page - Organization/Structure Progression Guide)

Community: Any contiguous area where people live and work, whether defined by government or not. This includes apartment complexes, condominiums, regional neighborhood areas, office buildings, towns.

Community Disaster Council: A larger network of community representatives from neighborhoods, businesses, local organization, and community groups who work together before and after a disaster to meet the disaster needs of a community. This includes representation from organized neighborhoods within its boundaries.

Community Disaster Plan: An organized, written plan for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery within a community, implemented through support of neighborhoods and neighborhood plans.

Neighborhood: A smaller area, determined by city blocks, natural terrain, social or cultural enclaves, or any other way its residents consider themselves as a "group." There are no rules, but time of a disaster by one or two people.

Neighborhood Disaster Committee: A "disaster council" within a neighborhood that finds itself individually organized within a larger, unorganized community.

Neighborhood Disaster Plan: An organized, written, and implement plan of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery for a neighborhood, involving neighborhood coordinators, liaisons, and teams.

Neighborhood Coordinator: Person designated as the neighborhood "leader" for the disaster plan, and acts as the liaison between that neighborhood, other neighborhoods, and the larger Community Disaster Council. If there is not a Community Disaster Council, this person would be the chair of the Neighborhood Disaster Committee.

Neighborhood Liaison: Person designated to work within the neighborhood or some part of it, with the existing neighbors, with new neighbors, conducting disaster assessments during a disaster, and reporting to the neighborhood coordinator.

Neighborhood Disaster Teams: Groups of neighbors organized and trained to fulfill a specific purpose during a disaster, i.e., first aid or search and rescue.

Disaster Resource Directory: A written record of all pertinent priority disaster response information used by the neighborhood coordinators and liaisons during a disaster.

Player: A "playful" word to describe any person with a major part in planning and/or response in the local disaster project.

Other Resources

There are many good disaster preparedness publications that provide information about organizing neighborhoods. Even so, many address only one type of disaster, and none of them address everything. Some helpful resources are the American Red Cross, the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Florida Division of Emergency Management and Sarasota County Emergency Management Internet websites.

<http://www.redcross.org/>

http://www.ready.gov/america/make_a_plan.html

<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=36>

<http://www.floridadisaster.org/>

<http://allhazards.scgov.net/Home.aspx>

<http://www.scgov.net/>

Remember - Projects Have Life Cycles

A neighborhood disaster preparedness project is never complete. It is a process, always evolving to adapt to changes in people's lives. The project will always be in flux because of its nature, its volunteers, and changing technology.

Volunteer Management

Members of your neighborhood who participate in this project will do so as volunteers. Managing volunteers takes special awareness and skill, and nonprofit organizations around the country have developed techniques, materials, and insights on how to do this well. The basic components of a good volunteer program are:

1. setting the climate of the organization so volunteers are valued;
2. defining the work that volunteers are needed for; writing job descriptions;
3. recruiting volunteers;
4. orientation and training for volunteers;
5. supervising volunteers in their ongoing work;
6. volunteer recognition;
7. evaluation of volunteer's performance;
8. evaluation of the overall volunteer program.

These eight steps are an integrated cycle. For a strong and growing program, no step can be omitted. They are also a sequence. For example, volunteer recruitment should come after the work has been defined, and after the organization has reflected on the role that volunteers do and will hold. For more information about volunteer management practices, contact the Friendship Volunteer Center at [Office: 1-941-953-5965](tel:1-941-953-5965) [Fax: 1-941-365-5718](tel:1-941-365-5718) 1750 17th Street, Suite B-1 Sarasota, Florida 34234

Don't Forget to Celebrate!

It is very important to remember and acknowledge your group's accomplishments. Even small steps accomplished today will alleviate a little of the fear of a disaster, build a bit more confidence in handling an emergency, add to the ability to share disaster education, and make households and neighborhoods more self-sufficient to deal with the first hours or weeks of a disaster.

Sometimes the scope of disaster preparedness can be overwhelming and create a sense of helplessness in people – even those who are participating in neighborhood preparedness efforts. Ceremonies and bench marking events are important components of any neighborhood disaster preparedness project. In addition to acknowledging individual and collective successes, they affirm our hopes and our reasons for being active in the project. Remember to recognize the accomplishments of volunteers, publicly acknowledge the group's progress, note special efforts of public safety officials, and mark anniversaries and special dates in your neighborhood.

Thanks For Your Work!

When you took on the task of preparing your neighborhood for disaster, you undertook a life-giving effort. Disaster preparedness, and readiness to respond to disasters, will result in reduced property damage, fewer injuries, and saved lives. The individuals and families who live in your neighborhood are already safer and better prepared because of the work you have done thus far.

First Things First

Make Lists! Get information! Don't Reinvent the Wheel!

Before you start to organize your neighborhood, you need to do some research and find out what is already being done. This will save efforts, particularly if there are existing organizations that can support your efforts. It will also avoid misunderstandings with other emergency response groups.

Through this research, you will gain important knowledge about major players in your community and county and how they can help your neighborhood become prepared. You will be building your own disaster network.

Start by making phone calls and contact the following departments. When you make contact, be sure to record names, positions, telephone numbers, and other helpful information for future reference. This will become part of your Disaster Resource Directory.

- A. Local fire department .
- B. The County's Office of Emergency Management
- C. The local Red Cross office.
- D. A local chapter of RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services).
- E. The local Humane Society.

A. Call the local fire department or district

Your local fire department is an important player in any community disaster plan. In an unincorporated area, the fire department usually becomes the authoritative body during a disaster for incorporated towns or cities the fire department may take direction from the city or town governments. 941-861-5000

Once you begin to have neighborhood organizing meetings, it is critical to have fire department representatives participate.

1. Are there other disaster preparedness groups, Community Disaster Councils or organized neighborhoods within the fire district? If so, how can you contact them to learn about their activities?
2. Would they be willing to meet and talk with you about preparing your community for disaster?
3. Would someone from the fire department participate in your neighborhood meetings?
4. Does the fire department offer disaster training for neighborhoods? If so, what kind of training, where, when, and at what cost?
5. Can the fire department provide disaster pamphlets, videotapes, or other resources for use at the community meetings? Are these available in other languages as well as English?

B. Call the County's Office of Emergency Management 941-861-5000

Your county's Emergency Management Office works with governments, agencies, and groups within the county to promote and assist in developing disaster preparedness.

During a disaster, county Emergency Management coordinates the response of government agencies. Depending upon the magnitude of the disaster, it can call on state and federal levels for additional relief assistance. This could include the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) or Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

1. Does the county EM program include organizing neighborhoods for disaster? If so, what kind of training, where, when, and at what cost?
2. Can EM speak at neighborhood meetings?
3. Can EM provide disaster pamphlets, videos, or other materials for use in the community? Are these available in different languages?
4. Does EM know of disaster related organizations or groups within the county that meet regularly to share disaster information? If so, who, where, and when? Could a representative of your community attend those meetings? Are there other disaster preparedness groups, Community Disaster Councils, or organized neighborhoods within the county? If so, how can you contact them to learn about their activities?
5. Has this EM office identified any potential hazards in your community (flood zones, earthquake faults, chemical companies etc.)? If so, can this information be made available for use in your community?
6. What government agencies does EM coordinate with during a disaster?

C. Call local American Red Cross chapter

The American Red Cross (ARC) is mandated by the federal government to respond to the needs of citizens during a disaster. The local ARC chapter usually meets the day-to-day disaster needs of the county such as family fires, small disasters, safety and disaster training, and other services. If the local ARC chapter is small and unable to fill some of these needs they usually ask for expertise from another ARC chapter or the ARC regional office. If a major emergency occurs, trained Red Cross volunteers will be recruited from outside of the area to help with the response.

1. Can the local ARC provide speakers for neighborhood meetings?
2. What ARC Disaster Training do they offer? When and where? Would they provide these training workshops in your neighborhood? Do they charge for disaster services?
3. Can the ARC provide disaster pamphlets, videos, etc. to the community? Are these available in different languages?
4. Has the ARC designated any sites in your community to be designated shelters during a disaster? If so, which buildings or locations?

D. Call local RACES chapter

RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services) is a national volunteer organization that is authorized by the federal government to provide emergency communications for government agencies during a disaster. Local RACES members usually work in the field and through the county Office of Emergency Management. Members can and do work within communities and neighborhoods during disasters.

1. Does RACES have any member operators in your area, community, or fire district? Who are they? Can you contact them to introduce yourself and tell them about the plans for a community disaster preparedness program?
2. Does RACES offer training for new amateur radio operators? If so, where, when, and at what cost?
3. Would a RACES representative participate in a community meeting?
4. How does RACES fit into the overall County or community disaster plan?

E. Call local Humane Society

Some Humane Societies have developed plans for the rescue of pets and large animals during a disaster.

1. If the Humane Society has a disaster program for animals, can they provide you with written information to be distributed at a neighborhood meeting?
2. Would a representative of the Humane Society speak at a neighborhood meeting?
3. Do they train others to help with animal rescue during disaster?
4. If they currently have no program, would they be willing to prepare some information that would be useful to persons interested in caring for their pets and/or livestock during a disaster?

After That

All the above research will result in a lot of useful information in organizing your neighborhood. The next steps are to:

- A. organize the information;
- B. build a start-up team to help;
- C. define neighborhoods within your community; and
- D. set the first neighborhood meeting.

A. Organize and Ponder the Information from Your Research

Most of the information gathered will be valuable in proceeding with neighborhood organization. Review what has been gathered and begin to think about the implications for your community. Is there a Community Disaster Council with which your neighborhood can connect? Is there organized neighborhood training available through the local fire department or county EM? You have probably learned that some agencies and organizations have paid staff to help organize disaster preparedness and some have dedicated volunteers.

You have also learned that your geographic location determines the potential, inherent types of disasters your community needs to prepare for. Wildfires may be the greatest threat to some communities; flooding will be of greater concern to others. There may be more than one threat to your community. This information determines which threats to emphasize when organizing your community – or you can play it safe and emphasize everything.

The end goal for all communities is to be prepared to meet a disaster, but each neighborhood will get there a little differently. Recognize that local governments differ in their plans and level of activities, due to differences in structure, assignment of personnel, and the demands of higher priority community issues. Although all government entities are required to have written disaster plans, some are more active than others. Some plans include community involvement and others don't. However, since the recent increase in hurricane activity, government agencies are showing increased awareness and interest in volunteer involvement in disaster preparedness and response. Governments are recognizing that trained volunteers will enlarge their work force following a disaster, and they are beginning to understand that it is better to establish community networks before a disaster.

You've learned a great deal from your initial research. You may feel elated or discouraged with all this information. Remember that organizing a neighborhood is an ambitious endeavor. It will take time, patience, and persistence, and it will be an on-going job.

The rewards, however, are great. Having a neighborhood that is self-sufficient is a comfort to all those involved. New friends are made, ideas are shared, problems are jointly solved, and a new sense of community comes into being.

B. Build a Start-Up Team

1. Enlist some help from your friends!

Draft two or three neighbors as you begin to shape goals and plan for the first meetings. Preparedness works when many neighbors take it to heart and feel ownership in the project. Don't try to do all the work by yourself – remember that a leader's job is to excite others with the vision of what is possible.

2. Set realistic goals

Keep it simple! Your goals should be a reflection of your neighborhood's needs and attainable with a reasonable amount of work.

C. Determine the Boundaries of Your Neighborhood Within Your Community

Neighborhoods can be defined by city blocks, streets, natural terrain, or social or cultural enclaves. There are no rules, but the number of homes that establish a community should physically allow for an easy survey at the time of a disaster. Be sure the area is easy to walk in a short time because the information collected after a disaster may have to be quickly turned over to care-givers such as paramedics and fire personnel.

Detailed maps used by the county and town fire department and paramedics (usually called "Run Maps," have been most useful in desire and identifying neighborhoods. They are usually free, are easy to obtain, and already used by fire departments and paramedics. Organized communities can use these maps to show items such as propane tank locations, water tanks, swimming pools, or other resources that might have a positive or negative effect on a community during a disaster.

D. The First Meeting

Now you are ready for the next step – setting up the first neighborhood meeting.

Setting Up The First Neighborhood Meeting

Why Meetings?

The first step in developing a good community disaster organization is to prepare each household for disaster. Unless the majority of households are prepared it will be difficult but not impossible, to have a self-sufficient, organized neighborhood. A neighborhood meeting is the easiest way to start.

Setting up the First Neighborhood Meeting

1. Time and Place

With your start up team, select a time and location when a good number of your neighbors can gather. Neighborhood meetings work best if held within the neighborhood and in a neighbor's home rather than in restaurants or public buildings. People attend and share information more openly in a less formal setting, which sets the tone for friendliness and cooperation. Some neighbors are hesitant to host a meeting in a small house – but remember small areas tend to help people talk to one another!

Neighborhoods could make the meeting more of a social occasion – like Saturday morning coffee or a Sunday afternoon barbecue – rather than a business function.

2. Recruit a Meeting Host

The host's role is to invite individuals to the meeting, share his or her personal interest in the need for neighborhood disaster preparedness, and make everyone feel welcome. Even if the event must be held at a community building, designate someone as host.

Recruiting a host for the initial community meeting can sometimes be discouraging, and creativity is necessary. Keep your ears and eyes open at other community functions for potential meeting hosts. Ask leaders in a homeowners association or community watch group to help. Divide the responsibilities of hosting a meeting – one person takes care of invitations, another offers their home, and another provides refreshments. Remind neighbors that by hosting a meeting they provide a very necessary and important service to their community – as well as getting to know their neighbors better!

3. Distribute Invitations

The most effective way to invite neighbors to a meeting is to hand deliver a written invitation. When the host hands an invitation directly to an adult household member, rather than mailing them or leaving them on the doorsteps, most neighbors will attend. This distribution process begins the process of neighborhood identification and recognition prior to the meeting.

Invitations should be distributed no less than three weeks prior to the meeting date. It is important to arrange for telephone or personal follow-up about three days before the meeting, to confirm attendance or persuade the uncertain.

Invitations should be simple and emphasize why it is important to attend the meeting - to learn about household and community self sufficiency, to meet local fire persons and paramedics, to get to know neighbors, and to learn about available community resources.

Agenda and Objectives at the First Neighborhood Meeting

The goal of the first meeting is to get your neighbors together, to build on the interest in disaster preparedness, and to start recruiting people who have disaster related skills to help with the organizing.

There will always be neighbors who choose not to become involved. You cannot force people to be prepared, but what you can and should do is keep them informed. Suggested outline of topics for the first meeting (most of these are described in detail in the next section):

1. Introductions and socialization
2. Presentation by local fire department or emergency management representatives
3. Slide show
4. Distribute Household Packets
5. Discussion of preparedness goals
6. Description of volunteer roles, recruitment of volunteers
7. Decide on next steps and next meeting

Suggested objectives for the first meeting:

1. Create a sense of urgency for developing personal preparedness in each household and in the neighborhood.
2. Distribute Household Packets to each household in the community. Make sure households that were absent also get information and materials.
3. Recruit volunteers for neighborhood coordinator and liaisons. If this project covers a large area with a number of neighborhoods, it may be necessary to recruit additional volunteer to coordinate the different neighborhoods.
4. Recruit volunteers to start Neighborhood Disaster Committee, or act as liaison to the Community Disaster Council.
5. Set a date for the second meeting.

Tips on Having a Successful Meeting

1. Record the meeting for future reference by taking notes or using a tape recorder. (This becomes part of your Disaster Resource Directory.)
2. Make sure everyone has signed in and received a household packet
3. Always ask if there are additional questions, but don't let questions or stories take over.
4. Present a quick outline of what you envision as the neighborhood's disaster goals. Remember not to state your ideas as concrete. Try to get others to talk about their visions and ideas. Input from neighbors makes this truly a community endeavor.
5. Don't distinguish between owners and renters. AR residents of a community need to be included in disaster plans and community meetings.
6. The maximum length for an evening meeting should be about one and a half hours, and include the presentation, questions, and the start of organizing.
7. Invitations should be distributed early! The only time to expect a good turnout for a meeting scheduled in less time is one hastily scheduled immediately after a disaster.
8. Neighbors who attend initial disaster preparedness meetings can become quickly overwhelmed by all the information. Handouts should address specific audience's children, people with disabilities, and animals.
9. Absentee owners – people who own property in the community but do not inhabit their property on a full time basis – should be notified about the initial community meeting and any further disaster plans within the community. If possible, provide them with the name of the community liaisons, a map of the community, and a Household Packet. Advise absentee owners to designate a neighbor to look after their property during a disaster if they are absent, and prepare their property appropriately for a disaster in case they are present.

Thank-you's!

Remember to write thank you letters. Volunteers can not be thanked enough! Send notes to the meeting host, the recruited community liaisons, and all others who responded to the call for volunteers. It's a good idea to include the date of the next meeting in this letter and any duties outlined for specific positions.

Parts of the First Neighborhood Meeting

Fire Department Presentation

Besides being an important player in a neighborhood disaster plan, and the "carrot" that will attract your neighbors to a meeting, the local fire department will cause your neighbors to take a much more serious look at what they need to do for their own survival, by helping them realize the limitations of disaster response personnel and equipment available to your community in a major emergency. Fire personnel or paramedics can describe the location of responding stations, the number of personnel on each duty shifts, the physical area of their services, their roles and services during different levels of emergencies, and the value of neighborhood participation in their disaster plan.

Slide Show

Your neighbors will respond to slides and a narrative about their community and its resources. A local slide show is much more effective than a commercial disaster video – not that commercial videos are inferior in any way. They can and do provide compelling additional information. However, showing both a slide show and a video may take more than the allotted meeting time.

Distribute the Household Packets

The goal of the Household Packet is to distribute a packet of information to each household that is not threatening, easy to read and identify, and contains comprehensive disaster preparedness information. Items placed in the packet should reflect the community's needs in a simple but comprehensive way.

Discussion of Neighborhood Disaster Preparedness Goals

These are suggestions of goals to discuss at the first neighborhood meeting.

1. All households will be prepared for disaster with:
 - A personal household plan
 - Neighborhood disaster training completed (first aid/rescue)
 - Supplies in place (home and car)
2. Our neighborhood will be self-sufficient and will have:
 - A connection to a Community Disaster Council or formation of a Neighborhood Disaster Committee;
 - One Neighborhood Coordinator and at least one Neighborhood Liaison
 - Teams of volunteers for:
 - First Aid, Medical, & Stress Managers
 - Search and Rescue
 - Safety and Utilities
 - Care of People with Special Needs
 - Shelter & Feeding
 - Communications
 - Active linkage to local fire department/government
3. To accomplish our goals, our neighborhood will involve lots of volunteers (so no one person feels like they have to do it all!) who are good spirited, supportive of each other, and remain committed to fulfilling the disaster needs of our community.

Description of Volunteer Roles; Recruitment of Volunteers

1. Using the Job Position Descriptions describe the role of neighborhood coordinator and neighborhood liaison. Ask for volunteers. A one-year commitment is necessary for all positions. If possible, do not allow the meeting to end without having these positions filled. If you have to, ask for a temporary candidate until a permanent candidate is found.
2. Ask liaisons to take household packets to neighbors who did not attend the meeting and to give each a brief report of the meeting. Do not leave these on the door step – hand them directly to an adult household member.
3. Ask liaisons to pick-up Neighborhood Disaster Registry forms from non-attending neighbors on a set date before the next meeting.
4. Describe the other teams and ask for volunteers.

Set a date/agenda for the next meeting

The second meeting should build on the first one. Neighbors who volunteered for positions should be at each meeting, as well as all others who wish to help organize the community. Information from the completed Neighborhood Disaster Registries (Part of the Household Packet) will be needed at the next meeting, so consider that in scheduling the meeting date. If possible, do not end the first meeting before a date for the next meeting has been set. Don't forget to thank all participants and volunteers.

List of Materials for Neighborhood Meetings

1. Before the Meeting
 - Invitations
 - Map of community showing the designated area included in the "neighborhood"
 - Confirm the meeting date, time, and location with the meeting host
2. At the first neighborhood meeting
 - Name tags and marking pens
 - Sign-up sheet
 - Pens and pencils
 - Household Packets, one per household
 - Additional Handouts
 - Extra maps of the community
 - Slide Show, projector, and screen
3. After the meeting
 - Thank you letter to host
 - Packets for specific volunteers including:
 - Thank you letter
 - List of duties and responsibilities
 - Map of area
 - Notice of next meeting
 - Notice of next meeting to all those who have volunteered for other roles
 - Record or minutes of meeting
4. Absentee Owners Packet
 - Letter explaining community organization
 - Map

The Second Neighborhood Meeting

Organizational Items

Before the second meeting:

- Remind your neighbors, volunteers, and anyone who attended the first meeting of the date and time of this meeting at least three days before.
- Make a list of all materials you will need for the meeting.
- Make copies for each attendee of any information that needs to be shared at the meeting including maps, parts of documents, etc.

During the second meeting:

- Recruit a co-chair and someone to record.
- Make sure that all attendees have a chance to participate and that one person does not dominate the meeting.
- Keep the participation on track.
- Remember that it is still important to hear all ideas, and that anything that happens at these meetings can be changed. It is important to be flexible.

Agenda for the Second Neighborhood Meeting:

- Determine the need for a Neighborhood Disaster Committee, or participation in the Community Disaster Council.
- Start developing a simple neighborhood disaster plan – how it will function and who will do what.
- Determine needed teams and outline their responsibilities.

1. Neighborhood Disaster Committee

If your neighborhood is individually organized and prepared in the midst of an unorganized and unprepared community – you should have your own Neighborhood Disaster Committee. Read the section on Community Disaster Councils/Neighborhood Disaster Committees for more information.

The Neighborhood Disaster Committee should be comprised of members of the neighborhood, especially people with skills to coordinate teams, and others who can support the functions of the neighborhood organization. Every member should have a distinct role, and it should be for the benefit of the neighborhood, not the individual.

2. Developing a Neighborhood Disaster Plan

Keep it simple! If your fire department and/or local government have a disaster plan and it is available to you, use it as a guide. If your community is organized and already fits into the community disaster plan, that plan will help determine what needs remain for inclusion into your neighborhood plan. You may also have access to other disaster plans from the organizations you contacted at the beginning of this project.

- The goals set at the first meeting can help structure a neighborhood disaster plan. Keep the focus on what the Neighborhood Disaster Committee's functional role will be before and during a disaster.

- Form a committee to develop the plan and suggest that a date be set for completion.

3. Establishing Teams and Their Responsibilities

The position of Neighborhood Coordinator and Liaison(s) may have been filled at a previous meeting. Now, neighbors are needed to fill team positions and work on the details of their duties. Refer to the completed Community Disaster Registry forms (from the Household Packets) to find skilled people. Recruiting will be an on-going process because neighbors move in and out of the community. (Hint: If possible, try to get outgoing neighbors to replace themselves).

The positions and teams (see section on Job Position Descriptions) are workable in disaster situations. Your community may demand additional positions and duties. Just remember to keep it simple. Positions and duties always need to reflect the needs of the community. If they don't do that, they are superfluous.

Before the Second Meeting Ends

- Recap the meeting and call for questions or comments.
- Make sure volunteers are clear about and comfortable with their responsibilities.
- Ask for additional ideas for the next agenda, (i.e., an annual community disaster fair).
- Set a date for next meeting. Neighbors who participate in these programs are just as busy as you are, and only want to meet when there is a good reason to do so. So, don't schedule meetings unless there is a reason.

By the end of the second neighborhood meeting your neighborhood has started developing an organizational structure to fit its unique needs to prepare for and respond emergencies and disasters. This is a big accomplishment.

What happens next is entirely up to you and your neighbors.

Be creative. What would you like to see happen?

Thank you for wanting to “**be prepared**” Let us know how we can help you!

**Sarasota County Emergency Management
1660 Ringling Blvd 6th Floor
Sarasota, FL 34236
941-861-5000**

<http://allhazards.scgov.net/Home.aspx>

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