

# **IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER PLANNING**

**Prepared for Arlington Civic Federation Delegates College 3/24/02**

## **▪ Educate Yourselves**

- Check out the Neighborhood Watch, Disaster Resistant Neighborhood, and FEMA's CERT (Comprehensive Emergency Response Team) information.
- Form a committee within your civic association or community that will develop a Disaster Response Plan.
- Find out what questions your community has about preparedness.
- Discuss:
  - What disasters should your community prepare for,
  - What elements might put your community members at greatest risk in a disaster,
  - Who in your community is at greatest risk in a disaster, and
  - What special resources your community might have to address a disaster.
- Ensure that your committee remains viable into the future.

## **▪ Educate Your Civic Association**

- Invite speakers from the Civic Federation, Red Cross, and/or the County's Emergency Coordinator (Captain Mark Penn) to address your civic association or community about disaster planning.
- Provide your community with information about the resources they need to have on hand to address a disaster, including:
  - Emergency kits,
  - NOAA radios,
  - Family disaster plans, and
  - Building emergency/evacuation plans for community members in high rise buildings.
- At a neighborhood meeting, discuss the best ways for your civic association to prepare for disaster.
- At every opportunity, encourage citizens to report suspicious activity to either the non-emergency police number or 911, depending on the circumstances.
- Re-educate your community periodically so that the community continues to understand the importance of preparedness.

- **Collect Information About Neighborhood Needs and Available Resources**

- Develop a neighborhood directory/resource list that shows people who you can fall back on in an emergency (special skills, training, equipment, etc.) Include interested neighbors with:
  - Retired, no longer practicing, medical personnel,
  - NOAA radios,
  - CBs,
  - Ham radio outfits, and
  - Four wheel drive vehicles.
- Ensure that your community's member lists, e-mail lists, and directories are current and remain so by setting up periodic checks. (Even if people don't choose to join the civic association, they should be encouraged to join the lists for informational purposes.)
- If you don't already do so, get to know your neighboring civic associations' officers and open up the lines of communication between your officers and theirs.
- Enhance the lines of communication within your neighborhood by increasing the use of e-mail groups, phone trees, and/or newsletters, if these methods aren't maximized currently.
- Work with your civic association to identify possible targets and weak points within (or adjacent to) your neighborhood.
- If your civic association doesn't already do so, increase the lines of communication between the police and the neighborhood by:
  - Introducing yourself to the police captain in charge of your area,
  - Encouraging the circulation of crime reports within the neighborhood, and
  - Encouraging periodic meetings between the police and the neighborhood to discuss crime trends and issues.

- **Develop a Disaster Response Plan**

- Among other things, consider:
  - How your neighbors can be notified of an emergency if normal communication methods are unavailable,
  - How you can communicate news, available resources, and needs within your community and with outside responders during an emergency,
  - How members of the community can support each other in preparing for and mitigating the negative effects of a disaster, and
  - What up-front plans and preparations need to be made by families and the community in order to better resist the effects of a disaster
- Periodically review the Plan to ensure that it still makes sense.

- **Secure Commitments to the Plan**
  - Secure the agreement of your community that they understand and will support the Plan. Negotiate any differences until you have buy-in.
  - Ensure that all parties that you are counting on for support or resources in your plan know:
    - What is expected of them,
    - When they will be expected to respond,
    - Who they turn to for direction, and
    - How you will be notified that they have responded.
  
- **Periodically Test and Update Your Plan**
  - Once you have a plan, decide how you can best test the effectiveness and completeness of the plan.
  - Test and update your plan until it is fully satisfactory.
  - Periodically re-test your plan (annually) to be sure that it remains viable.