

## Appendix D

# 5 STEPS TO NEIGHBORHOOD PREPAREDNESS (HOW TO)





# 5 Steps to Neighborhood Preparedness



# 5 Steps to Neighborhood Preparedness

**We never think a disaster will strike our neighborhood or at least we hope it won't! However, it is not a question of if one will happen, but when.**

Find out what you can do to help make your neighborhood better able to meet disasters head on and bounce back afterwards.

Use this Guide and accompanying Toolkit to build a disaster plan for your neighborhood.

Remember, you are not on your own. Fairfax County and its partner agencies and organizations have plans and resources

ready to help! But, with over 1.1 million people in the County, rescuers may not be able to provide immediate support to every neighborhood in need. Neighbors should be prepared to help themselves for several days to weeks depending on the size of the disaster.

Being prepared also means **neighbor helping neighbor**. Be sure to include:

- ✓ Neighbors with disabilities and others of all ages who may need help following a disaster
- ✓ Neighbors who have reduced ability or inability to see, read, walk, speak, hear, learn, remember, understand and/or respond

- ✓ Neighbors with visible disabilities such as wheelchair users, people who are blind, and those with hidden needs and disability such as heart conditions, respiratory conditions, emotional or mental health conditions, arthritis, significant allergies, asthma, and/or chemical and other environmental sensitivities
- ✓ Individuals who may lack transportation, single working parents, and those who may have limited or no ability to speak, read, or understand English and will need translated information



## NEIGHBORHOOD DISASTER PLANNING IN 5 EASY STEPS

# 1

### DEFINE YOUR AREA.

Identify a manageable area, your apartment building, one city block, a few small surrounding streets, etc., that you can organize with relative ease.

# 2

### RECRUIT LEADERS.

Develop a team of leaders who can help build the plan and carry out emergency support activities when the time comes.

# 3

### SCOUT YOUR AREA.

Get to know the lay of the land: what resources you have, what the landscape is, and disasters or other emergencies common to your area.

# 4

### BUILD YOUR TEAM.

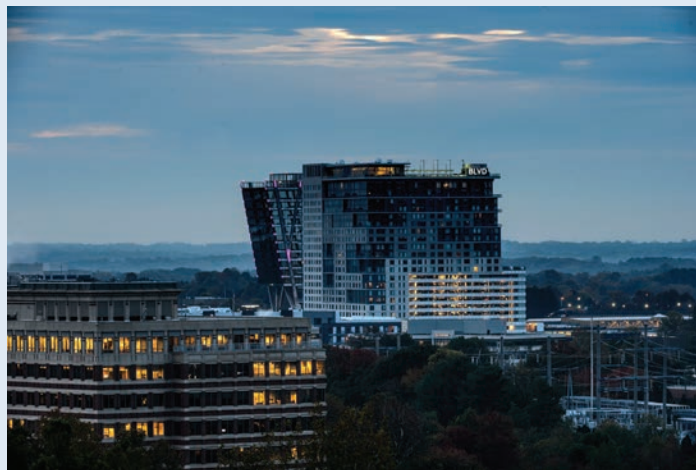
Find out who lives in your area, how they can help in a disaster, and who may need extra help.

# 5

### PLAN YOUR APPROACH.

Create a plan that outlines what your neighborhood will do before, during, and after a disaster!

*Reston*



STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR AREA

Clifton



STEP 1  
DEFINE YOUR AREA

From Tysons Corner to Annandale, our County is comprised of many different neighborhoods and communities.

In order for you to develop a disaster plan for your neighborhood, it is important to define the area that your plan will cover.

Here are a few questions to consider:

- ✓ What size area would be easy for you and a small team to manage? **25 to 40 households is the ideal size**
- ✓ Work within existing organized groups and networks when available (like neighborhood watch programs, etc.)

- ✓ Will you be able to easily communicate with everyone? What languages are commonly spoken?
- ✓ Will the area allow you to practice "neighbor helping neighbor" so that you can quickly identify who needs help and provide it?
- ✓ If your area is larger than 40 households, divide it into smaller areas with a "block captain" for each block (this is called area command)

Make sure that you make note of these:

- ✓ The number of homes, businesses, schools, churches, and other buildings in the area
- ✓ The number of people in the area
- ✓ The roads and other entrance and exit points, hills, and waterways

**Next**, chart your defined area on a map.

**TIP:** The easiest way to accomplish Step #1 is to walk your neighborhood, gathering this information.

STEP 2: RECRUIT LEADERS

Mosaic District



**STEP 2  
RECRUIT LEADERS**

Once you know the area that your disaster plan will cover, it is time to identify leaders! Here is what to look for:

**People with training and experience such as:**

- ✓ Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) or those active in neighborhood watch.
- ✓ Neighborhood councils, human services, clergy or business leaders.

- ✓ Police, fire, or military, health care personnel.
- ✓ Those with experience providing care for persons with disabilities or those who may need help following a disaster.

**Do you need two leaders or ten?**

- ✓ Are there a lot of people in one area of the neighborhood? Are buildings spread out?
- ✓ Match the number of leaders with the number of people who need to be led! The ideal team size is 3-7 persons.

Here are some ideas for finding and keeping leaders for your Neighborhood Disaster Plan:

- ✓ Talk with them, face to face, at community events, meetings, and when you see them day-to-day.
- ✓ Post messages on social media, neighborhood groups, and other networking websites.



**TIP: Get to know CERT! Community Emergency Response Team training prepares communities for disasters and it is free!**

STEP 3: SCOUT YOUR AREA

**STEP 3  
SCOUT YOUR AREA**

**3.1 THREATS AND RISKS**

Get to know what disasters or other emergencies your neighborhood might experience. Here are some helpful hints:

**Identify the threats.**

Earthquakes, power outages, extreme weather, and disease outbreaks happen everywhere, but tsunamis, landslides, and floods only happen in some places. List the threats that might occur in your neighborhood.

**Rate the risk.** Is the disaster very likely, somewhat likely, or not very likely to occur?

**Assess the risk.**

How vulnerable is your neighborhood to injuries, death or property damage? Classify these risks as high, medium or low. Use the directions under *Likelihood of Occurrence* and *Level of Impact* to assess your risks.

**Likelihood of Occurrence.**

- Almost Certain:  
Greater than 90% chance
- Likely:  
50 – 90% chance
- Moderate:  
10 – 50% chance
- Unlikely:  
3 – 10% chance
- Rare:  
3% chance or less

**Level of Impact.**

- Minor:  
Some disruption of service possible. Little or no property damage, personal injury, injuries, or fatalities.
  - Moderate:  
Disruption of some services. Minimum property damage, injury, and loss of life.
  - Major:  
Many services disrupted and/or structures severely damaged. Multiple people injured and significant loss of life.
- Use a table like the one below to list these threats and risks.

THREAT	LIKELIHOOD OF OCCURRENCE	LEVEL OF IMPACT (HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW)



STEP 3: SCOUT YOUR AREA

**3.2 NEIGHBORHOOD SPECIFIC HAZARDS**

Fairfax County is subject to many disasters. Examples include:

**Fires.** Especially risky if buildings are closely spaced or near thick brush. Fires can come from broken or leaky gas lines too!

**Earthquakes.** Every Fairfax County neighborhood is at risk of an earthquake.

**Ice/Snow.** Every neighborhood is at risk of an ice/snow event, even one of catastrophic proportions.

**Flooding.** Flooding may result from overflowing waterways, dam failures, heavy rains, or clogged storm drains.

**Tornadoes.** All areas in our County are subject to tornadoes.

**Electricity, Water, and Telephone Service.** These utilities may not be available for long periods after a disaster.

**Chemical Emergencies.** Industrial, freeway, railway, or broken pipeline accidents can cause chemical or hazardous material release.

**Disease Outbreak.** Outbreaks can result in many people becoming ill and disrupt key services.

**Extreme Heat and Cold.** Children, older adults, and people with certain types of disabilities or some chronic conditions are more affected when it is very hot or very cold.

**Terrorist Attack.** Many areas have potential targets for a terrorist attacks like schools, sports settings, or metro stations.

**Severe Weather.** The County is also subject to very high winds, hail, and thunderstorms.

**Local Hazards.** Be sure to identify hazards and risks that may be specific to your neighborhood, such as overhead electrical transmission lines, natural gas pipelines, chemical storage tanks, and other localized threats.

*Dunn Loring*





STEP 3: SCOUT YOUR AREA



Fire Station 40

**3.3 NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS**

Next, identify neighborhood assets. This includes anyone or anything that would be useful in responding to, or recovering from a disaster. Here are examples:

- ✓ Neighborhood emergency supplies
- ✓ Physical places like parks, schools, hospitals, and fire stations
- ✓ Organizations like neighborhood clubs, fraternal organizations, radio clubs, local military organizations, and disability service providers
- ✓ Persons trained in CERT, medical care, First Aid, Search and Rescue, carpentry, plumbing, or crisis counseling
- ✓ Businesses inside or close to the area that might be able to provide supplies or equipment
- ✓ Equipment and supplies for clearing debris, boats for rescue during floods, communication equipment, First Aid supplies, generators and other items useful during or after a disaster
- ✓ Evacuation resources, like accessible vehicles

**OK, and how do we identify them?**

Make a list of threats and risks to the community, and identify which assets your neighborhood would need in a disaster. Identify if the asset is vulnerable to damage and what can be done to reduce vulnerability. Be sure to list the location and contact information if applicable. Here is an example of a table that you can use:

ASSET TYPE	ASSET DESCRIPTION	ASSET LOCATION	ASSET CONTACT INFORMATION (24/7)

## STEP 3: SCOUT YOUR AREA

**3.4 DESIGN A MAP OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

Use an online mapping tool or other easy-to-obtain source. Make a sketch of your neighborhood. The free websites [earth.google.com](http://earth.google.com) or [maps.yahoo.com](http://maps.yahoo.com) may be useful.

On your sketch, show streets, blocks, and house/building lots. Show units and floors for apartment or multi-unit buildings. Number the lots sequentially (1,2,3). Include all address numbers and the names of occupants for each lot.

Contact information will be checked and updated if needed in Step 4. Include:

- ✓ All area entrance/exit routes that are accessible by foot, wheelchair/scooter, and car
- ✓ A Neighborhood Gathering Place (see next section)
- ✓ A location where the injured can be given First Aid or assessed for medical treatment
- ✓ Possible barriers that could make entry/exit difficult (e.g., fallen over/under passes, trees, or power lines)

✓ Neighbors who may need extra help following a disaster with seeing, reading, walking, speaking, hearing, remembering, understanding, and/or responding

*Dunn Loring*



STEP 3: SCOUT YOUR AREA



Tysons Corner

**3.5 NEIGHBORHOOD GATHERING PLACE**

This is a space for neighbors to organize response activities. Pick one large central area (e.g., park, recreation area, porch) to gather and organize the next steps in your neighborhood's response plan. Here is what to look for when identifying a possible Neighborhood Gathering Place:

- ✓ Easily seen so others will know this as the main gathering point
- ✓ Set in an area that is easy for everyone to get to

- ✓ Safe from flood, fire, fallen trees and power lines
- ✓ Has nearby accessible toilet facilities
- ✓ Well lit in case of night evacuation
- ✓ Can accommodate service animals and pets
- ✓ Big enough for planned number of persons and vehicles
- ✓ Is accessible to children and adults with disabilities

**3.6 TRIAGE AREA**

This is a place where people injured can be given First Aid or evaluated for medical treatment.



**STEP 4: BUILD YOUR TEAM****STEP 4  
BUILD YOUR TEAM**

The most important resources you have are one another! Follow these easy activities to build your team.

**Form a Group.** Make sure it represents the diversity in your neighborhood and includes homeowners, families, businesses, houses of worship, nonprofits, schools, and local organizations **in your defined area.**

Actively include people with disabilities and others who may need help after a disaster.

Your team should include CERT trained neighbors and can include those not CERT trained.

Also, determine if there are human service organizations; disability service providers; or residential, community care, and assisted living facilities in your neighborhood. If so, invite them to join the planning process and discuss how you may be able to help each other.

*Huntley Meadows*



**STEP 4: BUILD YOUR TEAM**

**Hold a meeting.** Ask the leaders you identified in Step 2 to get the word out about the meeting. Make sure that all households are personally invited. Also invite local Fire and Law Enforcement. Use the Facilitator Guide to facilitate the meeting.

Key meeting activities are:

- ✓ Review *5 Steps to Neighborhood Preparedness*.
- ✓ Identify the skills and equipment each neighbor has that are useful in disaster response.
- ✓ Identify spoken languages and American Sign Language use in the area.

**Encourage neighbors to attend the meeting.** A personal invitation is the best way to invite neighbors. Here are a few more ideas:

- ✓ Prepare a flyer (see flyer template in the Toolkit).
- ✓ Build a “Be Prepared” page on your neighborhood website.
- ✓ Set up a Facebook or Twitter page or piggy back off of a site with a larger “following.”
- ✓ Develop email lists of community leaders and organizations.
- ✓ Enlist community, business or homeowner organizations.

Using the chart you created in Step 3, write the following for each household/facility:

- ✓ Phone, email, text, special skills, resources, number of adults/children, pets/animals/service animals, persons who may need additional assistance.
- ✓ Create a phone tree or “notification chart” through which people contact each other to relay news.
- ✓ Walk the area at the end of the meeting to verify your sketch.

**TIP:** Use the same phone tree, text and communications system to notify neighbors door to door. If your neighborhood is larger, have block captains lead this.



Clifton

## STEP 5: PLAN YOUR APPROACH



Fairfax Government Center

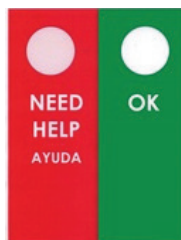
## STEP 5 PLAN YOUR APPROACH

### 5.1 PROTECT YOURSELVES AND YOUR PLACE

Before you do anything else, make sure that everyone is OK where you are. Once you have confirmed everyone's safety, prepare to go to the Neighborhood Gathering Place. Wear protective gear if you have it – a hardhat or bicycle helmet, steel-toe or other sturdy shoes, and leather or sturdy gloves. **Keep these items together in an easy-to-access location.**

Post the **OK/Help** hanger on your front door or window so that it can be easily seen from the sidewalk or street. The red

side means that you need help; the green side means you are OK. It is for use only after a disaster when 9-1-1 help is unavailable.



Shut off the gas only if you smell gas. If it does not have an automatic shut-off, turn the valve so that the "bar" is perpendicular to the gas line. Keep a wrench wired to the gas meter and know the location of water shut-off valves.

Proceed to the Neighborhood Gathering Place.

Once you arrive at the Neighborhood Gathering Place, the first task is to get organized.

**Select a leader to direct the overall effort.**

**Develop an Action Plan.**

Decide what you want to do, how you plan to do it, and what timeframe you are going to do it in.

**Organize into teams,** with a Team Leader for each team. Each team should have 3-7 people and a Team Leader.

**TIP: As needed, shut off main valves to your water and gas.** Shut off the gas by turning the valve so that the "bar" is perpendicular to the gas line. Keep a wrench wired to the gas meter and know the location of water shut-off valves.





STEP 5: PLAN YOUR APPROACH

A practice used by first responders and CERT is to organize using the Incident Command System (ICS). The chart below is an example. The **Incident Commander** is the leader. He/she is responsible for deciding what is to be done.

**Operations** carries out the decided actions.

**Logistics** coordinates resources (transportation, people, supplies).

**Planning and Intelligence** monitors information coming in and plans for future activities. Teams include:

**Search & Rescue Team.** This team will look for the **OK/Help** signs, as well as check on those listed as needing extra help. They begin with a damage assessment to identify hazard areas and prioritize Search & Rescue operations. Ideal members have completed CERT Search & Rescue training.

**Care Teams.** Care Teams can consist of the **Triage Team** – those who determine the priority that injured survivors will receive care; the **Treatment Team** – those who tend to the injured; the **Morgue Team** – those who manage the deceased; and the **Care Center Team** – those who provide extra care during the disaster. Members of these teams ideally have experience in healthcare.

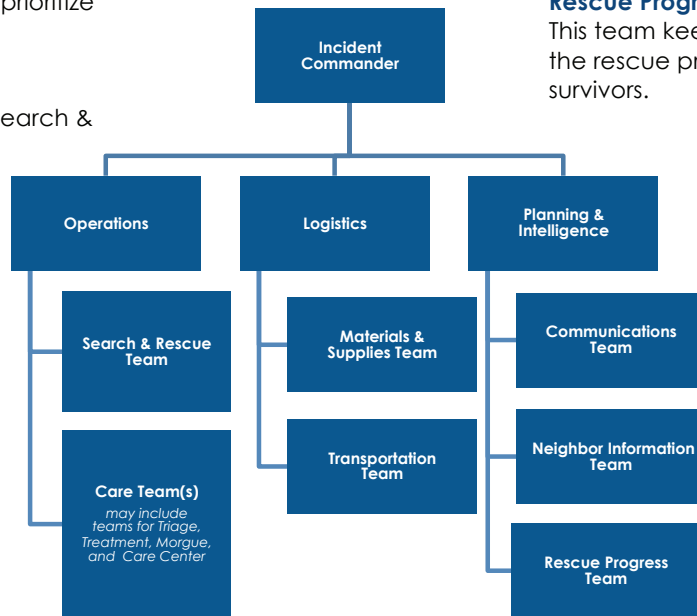
**Materials & Supplies Team.** This team coordinates needed materials and supplies from within the neighborhood.

**Transportation Team.** This team coordinates transportation of supplies, equipment and people.

**Communications Team.** The Communications Team listens to the Emergency Alert System, Family Radio Service (FRS)/ham radio, and/or National Weather Radio. The Communications Team is responsible for communicating information *within* the neighborhood, and to/from the neighborhood and first responders and other County agencies (like fire and police).

**Neighbor Information Team.** This team coordinates information about survivors and relays information about rescue progress and survivor status (injured, missing, etc.) from the Command Post to the Care Center.

**Rescue Progress Team.** This team keeps track of the rescue progress of survivors.



**TIP:** Assign team roles based on the needs of the disaster and the people who you have. You may not need to fill all of these roles for each incident.

## STEP 5: PLAN YOUR APPROACH

**5.2 COMMUNICATIONS**

Be sure to notify first responders via 9-1-1 or text 9-1-1 if you need emergency help! During a disaster, Fairfax County will keep the community informed using public and other media. Here are examples of sources:

**Fairfax County ARES.**

Licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment, for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes. Information can be found at [ffxares.org/](http://ffxares.org/)

**Internet.** Fairfax County provides emergency information through the Emergency Blog, [fairfaxcountyemergency.wordpress.com/](http://fairfaxcountyemergency.wordpress.com/)

**Telephones.** If you need to call someone, keep the conversation brief so that others may also contact loved ones or rescue personnel.

**Public and commercial media.**

Television, radio, and satellite will transmit emergency alert messages. Your car radio might be the easiest way to listen to emergency broadcasts.

**Fairfax Alerts.** The official mass notification system used to send voice messages, text messages and email messages to residents and businesses during times of emergencies and disasters. Notifying the public when a disaster strikes might be the one and only safeguard the public can count on to save their lives and protect their property. [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts)

**Emergency Alert System.**

Messages will be broadcast to the public via radio and television stations. These are voice messages with text scrolling on a television screen.

Oak Marr

**Safe and Well Website**

Encourage neighbors to register on the Red Cross "Safe and Well" website <<https://safeandwell.communityos.org/cms/index.php>>, or other form of social media, to let friends and family know they're OK.



STEP 5: PLAN YOUR APPROACH



Mosaic District

**5.3 PUT IT IN WRITING**

The next step is for you to put the plan in writing! A detailed description of the make up of the plan is provided here. Feel free to increase or decrease the scope of the plan as needed.

**Use the Plan template on the 5 Steps website; just fill in the blanks.**

**Basic Plan.** Should include threats, risks, your neighborhood sketch, and your basic approach to response.

**Support Annexes.** “Support Annexes” provide the added detail that go beyond the Basic Plan. They outline specific tasks, such as how communication will be carried out during and following a disaster.

**You and your neighbors decide which annexes you need.**

Other Annexes may include:

✓ **Shelter-in-Place.** Following a disaster, local authorities may determine that it is safer for individuals and families to remain in their places of residence, or “shelter-in-place”. This Annex details how neighborhood members will support each other if required to shelter-in-place for an extended period.

✓ **Mitigation.** Address ways that you can lessen the impact of disasters. Neighborhoods can establish “neighbor helping neighbor” programs for delivering food, medicine and water to people that are unable to get these items on their own.

✓ **Evacuation.** If an evacuation is called for, police and fire departments will use multiple means of communications to notify residents. Everyone should follow directions about which evacuation routes should be used. An evacuation section of the plan would describe how the neighborhood would assist authorities in an evacuation.



STEP 5: PLAN YOUR APPROACH

**Hazard Specific Annexes.**

Hazard Specific Annexes describe how the neighborhood will respond to fires, earthquakes, floods, and other threats.

**Emergency Door Hanger.**

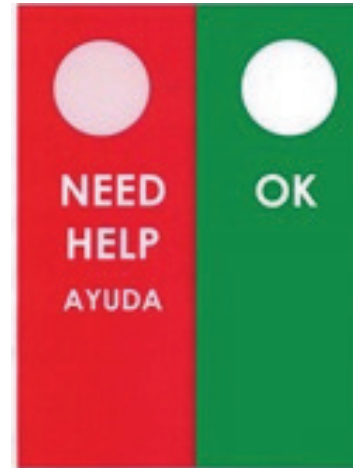
Fairfax County has created emergency door hangers that can be used to notify neighbors and local responders that you need assistance. Following a disaster, hang the green side of the door hanger facing out if you are OK. If you need assistance, hang the red side of the door hanger facing out.

**Review the plan with your neighbors.**

Once your plan is drafted, hold a meeting with other members of the community, ask them for feedback on the plan, and make any needed changes.

Make it available in languages commonly spoken in the neighborhood via email, a neighborhood website, or offer to read it or explain it to people unable to read.

Hold meetings regularly to review, revise, exercise, and update your plan. Do this at least once annually.



Reston

