

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Preparing for the Worst—Extreme Weather is Coming

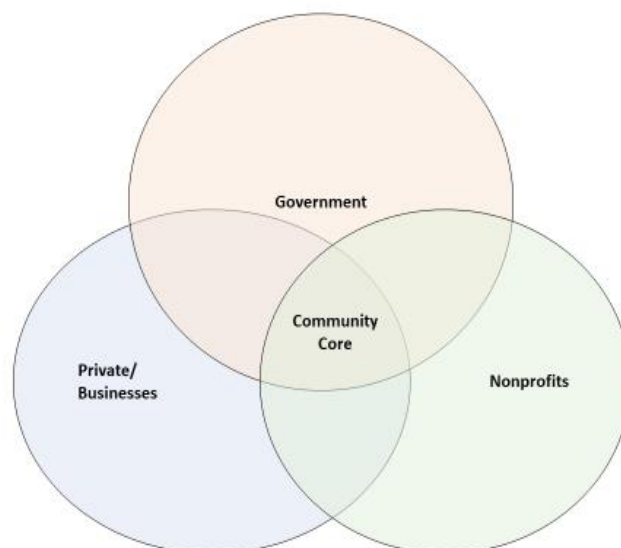
In 2009, the Citizen Corps National program, under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, conducted a survey to test community preparedness and participation and found that:

- 29% of Americans are not prepared for a disaster because they think that emergency responders will help them
- 60% or more expect to rely on emergency responders in the first 72 hours following a disaster

In extreme weather events, such as hurricanes and tornados, a successful emergency preparedness program is one with shared responsibility at all levels, including:

- Government
- Private sector
- Nonprofit
- Citizens

Individuals and households are the core of being prepared during a community disaster, but they are also the group least prepared to respond to emergencies. Local governments and businesses put forth hours of preparation and training for first responders to act, but overlook how well local citizens are prepared. If local citizens were better prepared for emergencies, the number of first responder calls to unsecured and unsafe areas during a threat would be reduced. Having local citizens prepare and secure their homes and property can reduce overall community losses. A better-trained citizen corps can expedite a community's recovery time.



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A community's ability to respond or recover from a disaster depends on the preparedness of each level in the community, but it needs to start at the community's core.

If Individuals and Households (The Core) are Not Prepared, It:

- Increases the chances of household members being hurt or worse, and can delay or hinder rescue efforts
- Places first responders and emergency crews in harms' way by entering unsecured or unstable areas for search, rescue, and recovery operations
- Increases the community's recovery time, as the available resources must spread across more of the community
- Increases the financial burden placed on the community, due to resources being spread across a greater area—the more recovery resources needed, the more financial burden on the community

It costs less for prevention programs than it does for recovery programs. By funding citizens' preparation and emergency preparedness training, it can reduce the amount of losses and damage, and reduce the community's recovery time. In addition, it may provide the community with more trained manpower resources to help when emergencies strike.

There are resources available, such as the [Community Emergency Response Team \(CERT\) program](#), which provides education and training to volunteers and community members about disaster preparedness. It offers training in basic disaster medical operations and disaster response within the community and neighborhoods so that professional responders can focus on more complex tasks to help speed up the recovery effort.

To Assemble a Strong Emergency Preparedness Program, a Community Should:

- Educate and train community members and residents on what to do in the event of an emergency.
- Educate and train community members on how to prepare their home or business in the event of an emergency.
- Develop emergency kits, bug-out bags, emergency supplies, and first-aid training.
- Develop partnerships between the government, business sectors, and nonprofits, such as churches, schools, and other community groups.
- Include partnerships within community's emergency preparedness plan.
- Develop, implement, test, and train in emergency communications.
- Build in redundancies in case an emergency knocks out a critical emergency plan component; always have a back-up plan.
- Determine what the recovery steps are, and what the plan is to recover as quickly as possible.

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Reality Check

First responders and emergency workers may not be able to reach everyone right away, just as utility providers may not immediately be able to restore critical services such as power, cable, cell towers, or even reopen roadways. The reality is that first responders and emergency crews may not get to everyone in the first 72 hours.

What is Your Reply to These Questions?

Can you list what community emergency preparedness training programs are currently available or offered in your community? How is this information communicated or advertised with the local citizens and how often? What can your community do to increase citizen awareness and training efforts?

Developing a Community Preparedness Program

For the greatest success, each community must promote personal and community preparedness through engaging activities for individuals, neighborhoods, and households; this is the building block to a successful community preparedness program. Preparedness should motivate, empower, and engage the whole community starting at the core.

Community Activities Start with and Include:

- Showing residents how to create a no-cost or low-cost disaster kit
- Developing a communication plan and bringing about public awareness
- Showing residents and neighborhoods how to establish a personal support network
- Educating the community on how to plan for, and practice an evacuation
- Educating the community on how to stay safe when evacuation is not an option (shelter in place)
- Continuing to practice the disaster plans and update them as needed

Show Community Members How To:

Reduce hazards:

- Identify and reduce hazards around the home or business
- Identify and reduce fire risks around the home or business
- Train everyone in the community on how to use a fire extinguisher
- Implement risk reduction, mitigation measures
- Protect important items and documents

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Make special preparations:

- Care for pets and service animals during a disaster
- Have a stay healthy kit (RX) and plan
- Prepare for extended utility outages
- Plan to recover after a disaster, structure safety, potential safety hazards
- Know and understand emergency management abilities and gaps in your area

Resources to Help Develop Community Preparedness Plans

- Local government groups: Fire and Rescue Department, County Emergency Management
- Nongovernment groups: American Red Cross, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), neighborhood watch programs, neighborhood associate groups
- Insurance providers

Resources

Ready.gov: <https://www.ready.gov>

Citizen Corps: <https://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps>

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT): <https://www.ready.gov/cert>

American Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org>

Weather Information: <https://www.weather.gov>

NOAA Audio Weather Radio All Hazards: <https://www.weather.gov/mfl/nwraudio>

Food Safety During a Disaster: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/food-safety-in-disaster-or-emergency>

Fire Safety: https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/severe_weather.html

FEMA: <https://www.fema.gov>

For additional information contact:

Tribal First Risk Control Solution Center Toll Free Help Line: (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.