

DISASTER PREPARATION by Paul Pitlick

After the recent fires in Los Angeles and small earthquakes in the East Bay and Southern California, it's reasonable to review disaster preparation locally. The City of Palo Alto has made extensive preparations for action in the event of a disaster, both with professional staff within the Office of Emergency Services (OES) and many volunteers. Importantly, comprehensive information is available online, both from OES and Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN) about how we can prepare ourselves:

BeInf.OES: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Emergency-Services/Emergency-Preparedness>

BeInf.PAN: < <https://paneighborhoods.org/paloaltoready/>



BeInf.OES



BeInf.PAN



GaK.FEMA



MaP.Ready



Stay Informed

There is a lot of information in these links, so the enclosed color brochure is a summary, if you have not already organized yourselves.

1. Get a Kit. The time to organize disaster supplies is before the event, not during or after. Item 1 on the colored brochure gives a partial list, and where to start. Something not mentioned in the list is that a pair of old shoes or slippers under your bed would come in handy if there was an earthquake at night and your windows broke. More information can be found at this link: GaK.FEMA: <https://www.ready.gov/kit> (QR code above).

2. Make a Plan. Organize. Item 2 in the colored brochure discusses deciding where and how to meet up with family members if you are in different places. And keep in mind that in the event of a major earthquake, all utilities including cell phones, may be non-functional. The brochure has a general outline, and more detail can be found at this link: MaP.Ready.Gov: <https://www.ready.gov/plan> (above).

3. Be Informed. You can sign up for Emergency Alerts at the OES link below (QR code above) and/or follow the Emergency sites, such as :  and  in the link for Stay Informed: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Emergency-Services/Emergency-Preparedness/Stay-Informed> (above).

4. Get Involved. I hope you are with me so far. Again the important things are to Get a Kit and Make a Plan at this point, but there can be more:

BPC: I mentioned above that in addition to the professional staff, there are also volunteer opportunities. One of them is the Block Preparedness Coordinator (BPC) whose role is to assess their block for building damage, and/or injured people, utility problems, etc. I am a BPC, and we all have walkie-talkies. In the event of earthquake, it's possible this will be the only way to communicate, and after we assess our area, we send a communication to our Neighborhood

Preparedness Coordinator (NPC), who then relays it to the Mobile Emergency Operations Center. To prepare, the BPC must buy a walkie-talkie and then take a 3- hour course with OES; a description can be found in the BPC link.



BPC

BPC:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Emergency-Services/Emergency-Volunteers/NPCBPC>

ABPC: There is also an Assistant-BPC (ABPC) position. Specifically, on my block 4 friends wanted to help, but they didn't want to buy a walkie-talkie or take the course. Each of them has their own block. After they assess it, they report to me, and I then send their information on to the NPC with my walkie-talkie. So, if you would be interested in working with me (or another BPC), we can arrange that. Please call or text/phone me at (650)-644-6514, e-mail at ppitlick@stanford.edu, or stop by (2139 High Street).

CERT: Members of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) support local governments by implementing disaster mitigation strategies and helping communities prepare for and recover from disasters. During a disaster, CERTS assist first responders with fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. If you would like more information about CERTs, my contact info is above.



CERT

CERT:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Emergency-Services/Emergency-Volunteers/CERT>

HELP / OK Signs: These signs are for your use. In the event of a disaster, please check your house. If things are in order, please put the **OK** prominently in a window or other place we can see it from the street. Conversely, if there are problems, show the **HELP** side.



HELP / OK sign

HELP / OK Signs:

https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/oes/npc-bpc/help_ok-3-lang-2020march.pdf

Medical needs. If someone in the house has a medical condition that requires electricity for a life saving piece of equipment, we suggest they have a backup device or generator. For oxygen, a back-up tank would be a good idea. In a disaster, we suggest having a prearranged plan for a family member, friend, or neighbor to help.

Finally, if you have a high school student in the house who is looking for a community service project, this might be something to consider.