

Emergency Preparedness in the Neighborhood

Engaging Residents as Partners in Disaster Planning and Response



**Stories and Strategies Drawn from Cities and Counties on the
San Francisco Peninsula**

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Primary Report Author: Greg Keidan

Editors: Terry Nagel and Terry Amsler

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Why Involve Residents in Emergency Preparedness?	3
Ten Case Stories	4
1. San Mateo County Gives Residents Options and Opportunities to Get Prepared.....	4
2. Neighborhood Networks Keep Burlingame Residents Connected, Safe and Prepared	4
3. Neighborhood Liaisons Support Redwood City Emergency Preparedness.....	5
4. Volunteer Emergency Response Teams Help Keep City of San Mateo Safe.....	6
5. Block Coordinator Program Connects Palo Alto Residents and City Staff.....	7
6. Woodside Nonprofit Helps Coordinate Volunteers and Organizations for Emergency Response	8
7. LEND Program Organizes and Trains Diverse Millbrae Residents in Disaster Preparedness	8
8. Helping Nonprofits, Child Care Providers and Senior Centers with Disaster Preparedness Efforts in San Mateo County	9
9. Pilot Program Involves San Mateo County Clergy and Congregations in Disaster Preparation Efforts.....	10
10. Fire Department Takes on Emergency Preparedness in Northern San Mateo County	10
Key Takeaways	12
Conclusions and Next Steps	13
Appendix 1: Questions to Provoke Further Thought and Dialogue for Local Officials and Staff Involved in Emergency Preparedness	14
Appendix 2: November 8, 2008 Peninsula Area Emergency Preparedness Meeting Participants	15



With the help of a Redwood City paramedic, a Community Emergency Response Team practices skills that will be vital during a disaster.

Introduction

A new phenomenon is developing on the Peninsula south of San Francisco. Groups of residents are organizing at the grassroots level to prepare themselves for emergencies. At a workshop on November 8, 2008, participants from 11 cities and organizations in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties presented some remarkable new models for empowering residents to be part of disaster planning and response.

What people have come to realize is that government cannot guarantee their safety during a disaster. With horrific visions of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath in mind, they know they will have a much better chance of survival during a major catastrophe if they prepare to be self-sufficient for three to seven days. Police and fire responders emphasize that they can't be everywhere during a disaster, and they say that they would welcome help from trained residents.

Residents have proven to be quite inventive in the ways they choose to augment existing city programs, which usually encourage individuals to take 20-hour Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. In Woodside, for example, residents formed a nonprofit that has purchased cargo containers filled with emergency supplies and triage kits. In Millbrae, residents have bought their own emergency-frequency radios and run regular radio checks. In San Bruno, an amateur ham radio group meets monthly. In Burlingame and Palo Alto, residents are organizing block by block for emergency preparedness. As they become better acquainted with one another, they are becoming eyes and ears for their communities, contacting local police about suspicious strangers and getting more involved in city issues.

Questions arise over how to integrate citizen-led emergency preparedness efforts with those initiated by government. Do neighborhood-based preparedness initiatives have a place in city disaster plans? How will cities communicate with neighborhood groups during disasters? Could cities collaborate with one another to deliver their residents emergency preparedness training more effectively and efficiently?

Read their stories, and you will become aware of the possibilities for local governments that figure out how to channel this huge reservoir of resident talent into their emergency planning efforts. With mounting interest in civic engagement under the Obama administration, as well as a new Cabinet post in California state government devoted to volunteers, now is the right time to figure out how to engage residents at the neighborhood level in disaster planning and response.

Terry Nagel
Burlingame City Council
tnagel@burlingame.org

Why Involve Residents in Emergency Preparedness?

Scientists and engineers now believe there is more than a 99 percent probability that California will experience a major earthquake of 6.7 magnitude or greater within the next 30 years.¹ “So it is a question of not *if* but *when* this will happen, and Hurricane Katrina was a wake-up call for us,” explained Burlingame City Council Member Terry Nagel at a November 8, 2008 meeting of local officials and others working on resident-oriented emergency preparedness efforts on the Peninsula south of San Francisco.

Emergency planning, preparedness and response that involves the community and draws on residents’ commitment, knowledge and networks is timely, given the threats faced by our communities from natural disasters and terrorist attacks. City officials are beginning to understand the value of encouraging resident participation and engagement in emergency preparedness and response. They know that in the almost certain event of a major earthquake in the San Francisco Bay Area, there will never be enough relief personnel to help everyone quickly. Disaster planners recommend that residents be prepared to be on their own for three to seven days in the event of a major disaster. In such cases, appropriately prepared residents can help their neighbors and provide useful information to first responders.

That is why a growing number of cities and counties are taking steps to transform their residents from victims to active partners with local government in emergency preparedness, planning and response. The following brief stories, which describe some of these efforts, are drawn from presentations made at the November 8 meeting and from follow up interviews conducted by ILG staff. The meeting was hosted by the City of Burlingame and the Institute for Local Government, and was sponsored by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. These examples are followed by a preliminary set of “Key Takeaway” insights and ideas that may help other communities that wish to pursue similar efforts.

There are undoubtedly other such stories from communities in the San Francisco Bay Area and around the state. The Institute for Local Government plans to collect and post some examples on its website during the coming year, and to host additional discussions designed to generate flexible and more comprehensive models of effective resident involvement in emergency preparedness and response. Please contact the Institute with examples of resident involvement that you would like to add to the evolving set of case stories in this important area by sending an email to cpereira@ca-ilg.org.

¹ In the San Francisco Bay Area the probability is 63 percent. Read *New Study Shows Odds High for Big California Quakes*, published 4/14/2008, available at www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1914

Ten Case Stories

1. San Mateo County Gives Residents Options and Opportunities to Get Prepared

JoAnn Scordino, a Certified Emergency Manager with San Mateo County, stressed that there are many different ways to effectively involve residents in emergency preparedness efforts. “As emergency managers, we can get set in our thinking that residents should do something specific like CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training, but everyone may not initially be ready for this level of involvement,” she said. (It is a 20 hour class.) “The truth is there is something for everyone to do, and we need to create different ways for different people to get involved,” added Scordino.

With this in mind, the county has developed a “preparedness pyramid” with different levels of involvement available to residents interested in emergency preparedness. For those who want basic information, a disaster preparedness video, Get Ready San Mateo County, is available for viewing on public television, DVD and YouTube, and it is being translated into languages spoken by immigrants in the community. For those who want to get more involved and connect with neighbors around emergency planning, there is the opportunity to form neighborhood block groups. These groups can be a way to attract more residents to enroll in CERT training. Individuals with CERT training are encouraged to share their knowledge with neighbors by hosting an introductory level “Get Ready” presentation. “Get Ready” meetings provide an opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other better and identify those who may have special needs (such as disabled people, elderly residents or pets). They also offer the added benefit of improving neighborhood crime awareness and prevention.

Scordino emphasized the importance of keeping volunteers with an interest in emergency preparedness engaged, trained and ready by providing leadership opportunities and ongoing ways to be involved. “The bottom line is to stay flexible and open in our thinking and look for opportunities to bring people together. It’s important to not use an all ‘doom and gloom’ approach. We need to look in a positive way at how we can flex our community muscle in an emergency situation,” she said. “We know emergency responders can’t do everything for everyone in a disaster, so it’s important to pool our resources, put the best information out there in a user-friendly way that is understandable to our residents, and bring people together.”

For more information, contact JoAnn Scordino, San Mateo County CERT Coordinator, at 650-599-1709 or jscordino@co.sanmateo.ca.us.

2. Neighborhood Networks Keep Burlingame Residents Connected, Safe and Prepared

City Council Member **Terry Nagel** started the first Neighborhood Network in Burlingame after hosting a coffee discussion with neighbors about emergency preparedness. She was concerned that some residents were operating under the false assumption that “they will rescue me if there is an emergency.”

Neighbors filled out forms asking for contact numbers and emails, names and ages of children, pet information, and equipment and skills that might be useful in an emergency, such as generators and

camping equipment, medical training, speaking a foreign language or experience in working with children. The information was organized into two directories: a public one with information that neighbors agreed to share with each other and a private directory that is accessible only to block captains who sign an agreement not to share this information except with safety professionals in case of an emergency. Each household was asked to donate \$5 to help pay for printing the directory and fliers.

The six block captains who run the Neighborhood Network in Burlingame's Poppy Drive area distribute neighborhood news and emergency tips via e-newsletter and fliers dropped on doorsteps; publicize opportunities for emergency preparedness, CPR and other training; advise residents of ways to get connected with the city via an emergency alert system, city e-newsletters, a crime reporting system and citizen engagement projects; and host social events.

Instead of overwhelming people with preparedness information, they decided to pass out fliers each month that urge neighbors to do one small thing to prepare for emergencies. A grant allowed them to produce nine educational fliers illustrated with entertaining cartoons by *San Francisco Chronicle* cartoonist Don Asmussen. Nagel challenged Asmussen to produce emergency preparedness fliers that people would actually read. "I think he succeeded quite well," she said. (See the cover of this preliminary report for a sample of Asmussen's work.)

The group attributes much of its success to social events that make it fun to stay connected. "We do things like caroling, potlucks and coffees at election time to discuss ballot issues. We even had a holiday party with a mountain of snow for children to play in," Nagel said. "As a result, our neighborhood is more tightly knit." Elderly residents tell her they feel safer, young families have found playmates and babysitters for their children, and neighbors stop and talk with one another on the street. Last year, neighbors on her block worked together to thwart a burglary in progress. "A year before, they never would have gotten involved," Nagel said.

Nagel is currently working to expand the Neighborhood Network to other parts of the city. To date, 61 Burlingame residents have taken a "Network Your Neighborhood" course taught by the block captains. Nagel hopes to create connections between networks and to integrate them more completely with the city's emergency preparedness plans. She believes such networks can boost civic engagement by helping city officials and residents communicate more effectively with one another.

For more information, contact Burlingame City Council Member Terry Nagel at 650-347-3576 or tnagel@burlingame.org.

3. Neighborhood Liaisons Support Redwood City Emergency Preparedness

Erica Spacher runs the innovative Neighborhood Liaisons program in Redwood City. Neighborhood Liaisons agree to meet and talk to a few of their neighbors, have them fill out contact sheets, and then help get some of these neighbors together to come up with and then work on a neighborhood project. It's kind of like the traditional "block captain" concept, but with a self-starting, community-building angle. Spacher reports that emergency preparation is the most requested training by these residents, and several such sessions are held each year. Once a year, a short basic disaster preparation class is taught to Neighborhood Liaisons, who then take the information back to others in their neighborhood.

The city offers up to \$300 for expense reimbursement to groups that hold neighborhood events, as long as they invite the Fire Department to attend and inform residents about emergency preparation opportunities such as quarterly, "Are You Ready" preparedness classes. These classes lead in to the full 20-hour CERT training program for residents who want to learn more, and there are currently 150 CERT trained residents in the community. The Fire Department also conducts emergency preparedness trainings at local schools, businesses and retirement communities. The city is working to meet the challenge of involving the many residents who are more fluent in Spanish than English in these efforts by conducting some classes in Spanish.

Mike Mancusi, a CERT trained resident who now conducts "Are You Ready" classes in Redwood City, identified what he perceived to be one of the major challenges to effectively involving residents in disaster preparedness. He noted the cultural differences between the Fire Department, which sponsors trainings and which has a command and control structure, and most residents who volunteer, who work in a business or field where command and control is not the culture. Mancusi reports that a lot of effort has been made to get these two groups to work well together and understand each other. He suggests that Fire Departments can benefit from training on how to work effectively with volunteers, and that an organization such as the Red Cross that works extensively with volunteers might be able to help provide a useful example.

For more information, contact program coordinator Erica Spacher at 650-780-5905 or espacher@redwoodcity.org, or volunteer Mike Mancusi at mmancusi@batnet.com.

4. Volunteer Emergency Response Teams Help Keep City of San Mateo Safe

The City of San Mateo's Fire Department started a neighborhood emergency services program in the mid-90s. This program was reorganized in 2006 to conform to the CERT national curriculum. In its first year and a half, 539 residents participated in the course, which meets one night a week for six weeks and has been offered 14 times so far. A total of 420 residents have completed the course, thus becoming a part San Mateo's emergency response team. This team is broken into six Emergency Response Districts (ERDs). Volunteers from each ERD meet every one or two months to talk about issues such as disaster needs in their community and what resources are available. Each ERD sends a representative to a monthly steering committee meeting.

Firefighter **Robert Cook** works hard to motivate and encourage people to participate in the CERT training program and to keep previous students connected and engaged. "People aren't excited to talk about disasters and bad things. They would rather not think about it," he said. However, he finds and inspires new participants through a determined outreach effort that includes presentations to community groups, senior centers, schools, homeowner associations meetings, fliers in coffee shops and other community gathering spots, notices on electronic and library bulletin boards and local public access television, community events such as a recent safety fair at a local Home Depot, and press releases and web-based information about CERT efforts and disaster preparedness exercises.

Cook stays in touch with previous students via email updates about every two months, and asks them to help sign up new students. He is currently developing continuing education classes for those who want more training, such as "Sandbagging 101" and "How to Set Up a Shelter." Graduates are also asked to help teach new students and to participate in disaster drills. One recent drill simulated a

terrorist attack, and volunteers had to distribute antibiotics. The biggest event for the city's CERT graduates is an annual barbecue, a popular event where graduates reestablish relationships that make them effective team members and talk about current disaster preparedness efforts. Many of the department's firefighters help train volunteers and keep them engaged.

Cook and other Fire Department volunteers have inspired many residents to get active in the amateur radio field. The city also purchased four trailers equipped with radio and search and rescue gear at a cost of \$30,000 to \$40,000 each, using money from a 2003 insurance settlement. This equipment should allow volunteers to communicate with the city emergency operations center from mobile command and control points during any disaster.

For more information contact Robert Cook at 650-522-7522, X 6377, or at rcook@cityofsanmateo.org.

5. Block Coordinator Program Connects Palo Alto Residents and City Staff

Palo Alto's Block Coordinator Program encourages all residents to be the eyes and ears of their neighborhood, while empowering them to work productively with city staff in times of crisis. The initiative for this program came after 9/11 when neighbors wanted to know what they could do to help, according to **Annette Glankopf**, chair of the Palo Alto Neighborhoods Disaster & Emergency Preparedness Committee. After exploration by several committees, including a City Council sponsored Red Ribbon Task Force, the City Council adopted emergency preparedness as a key priority for 2006 and 2007.

In January 2008, a city-wide program for neighborhood preparedness was launched. The program is a collaboration between more than 30 neighborhood groups in Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN) and the City of Palo Alto. The program goals are: (1) to ensure resident resiliency in the face of any emergency or disaster; and (2) to develop a process for residents to communicate with the City about disaster response and recovery.

The heart of the program is the Block Preparedness Coordinator (BPC). The program trains BPCs as well as Neighborhood Preparedness Coordinators (NPC) in residential and commercial districts. One primary role of the BPC is to meet with their neighbors, perhaps at a block party, and develop a block directory. The second role is that of a communicator in an emergency or disaster. Each BPC is also asked to set up a phone tree and an email list that can be used to quickly disseminate information, such as neighborhood news or emergency alerts from the city. If the phones go out, FRS radios and runners will be used to allow BPCs to communicate with city officials about conditions on their block. Regular drills are conducted in collaboration with Palo Alto CERT-trained volunteers and police and fire department staff in order to test this radio communications network. BPCs and NPCs will be provided with vests and city IDs to identify themselves to disaster service workers during an emergency.

For more information, contact program chair Annette Glanckopf at Annette_G@att.net.

6. Woodside Nonprofit Helps Coordinate Volunteers and Organizations for Emergency Response

Woodside's Citizens for Emergency Response Preparedness Program, or CERPP, is a nonprofit organization that partners with the local fire department to teach CPR, babysitter and basic first aid training for small children in schools, and CERT and radio training classes for adults. CERPP also runs an advanced 50-hour emergency responder class, has a disaster animal rescue team (DART) and is developing a medical reserve corps. A communications committee uses radios of various types to create an emergency communications network in collaboration with the county. Twice-yearly field exercises aim to get the whole community working with the fire department and the city, training volunteers to distribute community-specific emergency supplies such as cots, blankets, radios, medical triage kits and water.

"If you want to work with a partner organization in a disaster, it is important to make this a working relationship ahead of time," said **GayLynne Mann**, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Woodside Fire Protection District. "We have created communication charts for different groups, detailing who speaks to whom and when." Free Yahoo online Groups are used to help volunteers communicate about meetings, training opportunities and community events.

For more information contact GayLynne Mann, Woodside Fire Protection District Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, at 650-740-9206 or gmann@woodsidefire.org.

7. LEND Program Organizes and Trains Diverse Millbrae Residents in Disaster Preparedness

The Millbrae Fire Department organized the "Location, Emergency, Number of People and Disposition" (LEND) program in 2007 to bring together a network of community volunteers and resources to help during major emergencies. A team of firefighters provides a series of classes focused on aiding first responders. The participants learn how to assess and communicate injuries and dangerous situations within the city during a major catastrophe by means of a two-way handheld wireless radio system. The network creates a means of communication in case normal telecommunication is disrupted. In an emergency, the LEND radio operators, Millbrae HAM radio operators and volunteers who have CERT training would coordinate with the city's Emergency Operations Center, which includes a state-of-the-art mobile communications van, to prioritize the most dangerous areas and injured people in most dire need of services.

Millbrae's 21,000 residents are culturally diverse. This year, a Mandarin Chinese language emergency preparation class was presented for the first time. There are also plans to incorporate the Millbrae "Volunteers in Policing" as partners in the program.

"Amazing things happen when you gather and train people who care about each other and their community. They want to learn more and more," said Millbrae City Councilwoman **Marge Colapietro**. "It is very important to keep the training and the volunteers regularly linked as we do during a monthly radio net drill."

“Our residents have a desire to volunteer. We want to feel we contribute in a meaningful way, and by doing so, really make a positive difference in our community. Millbrae has a variety of public service opportunities to offer. Public Safety has always been the number one priority in our community, so our Fire and Police Department staffs relate well to volunteers. Well trained volunteers are one of the greatest assets a community can hope for in both short and long term emergency and disaster planning,” continued Councilwoman Colapietro.

For more information, contact Millbrae Councilwoman Marge Colapietro at: Marge4Millbrae@att.net.

8. Helping Nonprofits, Child Care Providers and Senior Centers with Disaster Preparedness Efforts in San Mateo County

Thrive is the alliance of Nonprofits for San Mateo County, established in 2000. In the wake of Katrina, members created the Thrive Emergency Task Force to “create specialized training for the nonprofit and faith-based sectors that follows the training format of other emergency preparedness programs, so that we are all on the same page,” according to **Dena Gunning**, who also works with the City of San Bruno’s Community Preparedness Committee. The Thrive Emergency Preparedness Program for Nonprofits was established to pool local community resources and to develop a regional mutual aid collaboration in the Bay Area as well as in San Mateo County. “We are trying to make sure that the nonprofits that help people are still able to function during a disaster,” said Gunning. “The goal is to provide the tools and technical assistance that San Mateo County nonprofits need to strengthen their capacity and preparedness efforts by maintaining a vibrant network of disaster-resilient organizations. Our community’s vitality and well-being are dependent upon the services of our nonprofit and faith-based organizations. Why wouldn’t we want to ensure their resilience?”

Thrive is working in partnership with the San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services to create a nonprofit safety communications network. So far, the Thrive Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Project has trained 14 licensed HAM radio operators at local nonprofits. The idea is to enable nonprofits to communicate through Thrive their needs and resources following a catastrophic event, such as an earthquake, that would potentially disable all other forms of communication.

Gunning also spoke about the “4Cs Ready” disaster preparedness program for child care providers organized by the Child Care Coordinating Council of San Mateo County. The six-hour training program for child care providers starts with personal preparation, helps them write an emergency preparation plan, teaches fire suppression methods and suggests ways to help children deal with disaster.

The City of San Bruno’s Community Preparedness Committee offers free emergency preparedness planning to senior care facilities and child care centers. Gunning reports about a 35 percent response rate from the senior centers the committee has contacted. Those that responded have all received free training and supplies.

For more information, contact Dena Gunning, Emergency Services Specialist with Thrive, the Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs) and the San Bruno Community Preparedness Committee, at 650-339-0721 or dena@thrivealliance.org.

9. Pilot Program Involves San Mateo County Clergy and Congregations in Disaster Preparation Efforts

The Peninsula Clergy Network (PCN) is a professional association of the Peninsula's 440 clergy. The PCN's pilot disaster preparedness and response project in Redwood City creates a structure that incorporates congregations into the San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services (OES) emergency response system. The project has designed three cluster areas with a different core congregation as the response center for each cluster and other congregations playing a supporting role. Core congregations are located within a mile of each other. They are meant to be a resource for the entire neighborhood, according to PCN Program Coordinator **Gina Quiney**. "The idea is that people will come to the core congregations in an emergency and someone there will be able to direct them to a congregation that has the needed resources," said Quiney.

So far, the network has submitted a questionnaire to all congregations in the area asking about their available resources. PCN is also working with Redwood City neighborhood liaisons, other nonprofits and city agencies to create a structure for communication using community and congregation representatives. In order to ensure that all residents are aware of and engaged in emergency preparedness, PCN has translated disaster preparation materials into Spanish and Tongan. Emergency preparation trainings are being organized in collaboration with congregations. In addition, water that is stored in non-plastic containers that can be kept for up to five years is being distributed through congregations at \$15 for 12 one-liter boxes.

Future plans include working with the American Red Cross and OES to identify and prepare emergency shelters and to train people from congregations to work at these shelters. Following the pilot, this project will be expanded to additional communities in order to engage more congregations as neighborhood institutions for disaster preparedness and response.

For more information, contact PCN Executive Director Rabbi Jay Miller at 650-627-0065 or pcn@blueconnect.org.

10. Fire Department Takes on Emergency Preparedness in Northern San Mateo County

The Colma Fire Protection District works in the small Town of Colma and in the village of Broadmoor in unincorporated San Mateo County. The district was founded by volunteers in 1925, and continues to involve volunteers from the community in emergency preparedness efforts. Over the past year and a half, the district has provided CERT training to 38 volunteers in Colma, and the town has purchased backpack emergency kits for each of the 461 living units in town. They also have emergency kits, blankets and water stored at the community center.

According to Disaster Preparedness Coordinator **Sean O'Connor**, the district is currently working to get more residents engaged in personal disaster preparedness. O'Connor is preparing a flier about the two hour preparedness classes and the full CERT training program he leads to be sent out to more than 2000 homes. He also plans to promote emergency preparedness training in partnership with the Town

of Colma in the future. The Colma Police Department is planning a Neighborhood Watch program that would involve block captains and block parties, and could create an opportunity for outreach about emergency preparedness training opportunities.

Another goal is to find someone from within the current CERT team willing to take on a leadership role to head up a new network comprised of local CERT-trained volunteers, and to take on some responsibility for the growth and marketing of this network, said O'Connor. "The idea is that the Fire Protection District would train the emergency response team, provide equipment and help coordinate drills, but that volunteers would manage the day-to-day activities themselves. For that we need to find a volunteer team leader as they have in Redwood City and The City of San Mateo."

For more information, contact Sean O'Connor, Colma Fire Protection District Disaster Preparedness Coordinator at 415-533-4643 or soconnor@colmafd.org.

Key Takeaways:

What did we learn from this gathering of individuals interested in emergency planning and response at the local level? Here are a few observations:

- The examples in this report suggest a variety of opportunities and approaches for cities and counties to engage residents in emergency preparedness and response and give evidence that residents are ready to pitch in and augment local agency efforts.
- Being flexible and creating a number of different ways for people to get involved will attract greater participation and add to a community's overall capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies.
- Make sure your local elected officials are informed and on board with any emergency preparedness or response effort involving residents. City Council members should be clear about their own collective and individual roles in an emergency.
- In addition to residents and others trained to serve during an emergency, don't forget that there will be "spontaneous volunteers" who show up at the scene. Have appropriate plans for directing and managing these residents as well.
- Volunteers, whether CERT-trained residents or members of neighborhood networks established to aid in emergency preparedness and response, need to be integrated into formal plans and operations of local and state agencies. Don't leave the community resources and neighborhood groups out of the communications loop.
- CERT training and capacity remain a key element and a foundation for community emergency preparedness and response. Efforts to coordinate CERT trainings regionally and to continually develop the capacities of and relationships among CERT volunteers in the community are critical.
- To take full advantage of residents interested in aiding in emergency preparedness and response, appropriate city and county staff may have to take on somewhat new and different roles to effectively recruit, coordinate and support these volunteers.
- Local officials may find that there are "value-added" benefits to the development of neighborhood networks and other volunteer opportunities described in this report. As neighborhood residents come to know one another better, there is a greater likelihood they will know each other's household members, routines and medical needs. This familiarity will help them direct aid to those in need in post-disaster situations. Additionally, the development of trust and support ("social capital") among those residents who come to know each other better enhances caring about one's community in general and tends to increase resident satisfaction.
- Clergy and congregations can be important resources in local emergency preparedness efforts. Through the clergy, important information can reach community members and additional

emergency communication networks can be established. Additionally, churches, synagogues, temples and other buildings of faith can be used as shelters and for storing emergency supplies and resources.

- Recognition and nominal rewards can make a big difference when seeking to attract and retain residents in emergency preparation and response efforts. For instance, the Woodside Fire District has developed a successful “passport” system that awards stickers to residents for each class or training they take.
- When reaching out to the community to inform or engage residents in areas with extensive multi-family housing, it’s often better to organize meetings for residents of a specific apartment building or one-block area. Doing so allows organizers to target information, questions and issues to address those attending.
- Give people “do-able” pieces of information and tasks that people can understand and make progress on rather than overwhelming them with everything they have to do to prepare for the “big one.”

Conclusions and Next Steps

This report describes efforts by local officials and residents to share appropriate responsibilities for emergency preparedness and response in their respective communities. A variety of approaches were represented at the November 2008 meeting including some that are quite innovative and rare in California. These experiences offer ideas and guidance for cities and counties wishing to undertake similar efforts around the state. They also represent the sort of collaboration that is increasingly characteristic of effective local governance.

This report will be circulated to local officials and others in the region and will be available on the Institute for Local Government’s website. The Institute also plans to research additional examples of neighborhood participation in emergency preparedness and response in cities and counties throughout California and to create an expanded publication reflecting this state-wide focus.

Appendix 1: Questions to Provoke Further Thought and Dialogue for Local Officials and Staff Involved in Emergency Preparedness

Here are some questions intended to promote discussions among local agencies that are developing their capacities to engage residents in emergency preparedness:

- How can cities integrate neighborhood-based preparedness initiatives into disaster plans?
- How will cities communicate with neighborhood groups during disasters?
- How will cities activate their CERT-trained citizens?
- How will they communicate if they can't talk by phone or text message? Should trained citizens have access to radios that interface with city communication networks?
- How can cities and neighborhood groups identify ham radio operators during a disaster?
- Should citizens in different cities have the same type of radios so they can communicate?
- Could cities collaborate to deliver CERT training more effectively and more efficiently?
- Do city council members know their roles during a disaster?
- How can cities keep CERT-trained individuals and neighborhood groups engaged in emergency preparedness and disaster response training?
- Should cities provide identification cards, vests and helmets to those with CERT training, and/or to people in neighborhood groups?
- What incentives prompt citizens to get prepared?
- Could cities make it easier for people to assemble kits by having all the supplies available in one place?
- Can groups that form for emergency preparedness also be engaged in other city issues?
- Can municipalities create a library of shared templates for handouts, Web sites and best practices that would be shared with citizens online?
- Would firefighters benefit from training designed to help them work more effectively with volunteers?
- Would it be more effective, and less expensive, for cities to hire professional trainers to deliver CERT training and organize activities to keep those trained engaged?
- Could we do a better job of coordinating emergency preparedness training for nonprofits, schools, day care centers, senior facilities, disabled individuals and pet owners?

Appendix 2: November 8, 2008 Peninsula Area Emergency Preparedness Meeting Participants

Laura Allen, Interim City Manager, Town of Colma

Terry Amsler, Director, Collaborative Governance Initiative, Institute for Local Government

Randy Breault, Director, Office of Emergency Services, City of Brisbane

Marge Colapietro, Councilmember, City of Millbrae

Robert Cook, volunteer, City of San Mateo Fire Department

Annette Glanckopf, Chair, Palo Alto Neighborhoods Emergency Preparedness Committee

Dena Gunning, Emergency Services Specialist, Child Care Coordinating Council, Thrive, and the City of San Bruno

Mike Kasperzak, Councilmember, City of Mountain View

Greg Keidan, Program Coordinator, Collaborative Governance Initiative, Institute for Local Government

Mike Mancusi, CERT Team Leader, City of Redwood City

GayLynne Mann, CERT Coordinator, Woodside Fire Protection District

Terry Nagel, Councilmember, City of Burlingame

Jim Nantell, City Manager, City of Burlingame

Bill O'Callahan, Office of Emergency Services Supervisor, San Mateo County

Sean O'Connor, Disaster Preparedness Coordinator, Colma Fire District

George Peponis, Community Preparedness Committee, City of San Bruno

Gina Quiney, Program Coordinator, Peninsula Clergy Network

Manny Santamaria, Program Officer, Silicon Valley Community Foundation

JoAnn Scordino, CERT Coordinator, San Mateo County

Erica Spacher, Neighborhood Liaisons Program Coordinator, City of Redwood City

Paula Stinson, Leadership 2008

Rocque Yballa, Disaster Preparedness Manager, Central County Fire Department

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Institute for Local Government is the nonprofit research affiliate of the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties. Its mission is to serve as a source of independent research and information for California's communities and their leaders.

The Institute's current program areas include:

- Climate Change
- Collaborative Governance Initiative
- Communities for Healthy Kids
- Intergovernmental Dispute Resolution
- Land Use and Environment
- Local Government 101
- Public Service Ethics



1400 K Street, Suite 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Telephone: 916.658.8208 Fax: 916.444.7535

www.ca-ilg.org