

# **CERT AND NERO**

## **COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM & NEIGHBORHOOD EMERGENCY RESPONSE ORGANIZATION**

Vashon Island Fire & Rescue (VIFR) personnel are trained and equipped to respond to any local emergency on Vashon-Maury Island. A telephone call to "911" can normally provide for the fire department personnel to be the "first responders" on-site within minutes to extinguish house fires, provide emergency medical aid, respond to auto accidents, etc. For victims of any emergency that requires advanced medical attention, the department has the facilities for transporting these cases to hospitals off-island either by helicopter or emergency ferry service.

However, because we are truly an island, in the case of a major large scale disaster (such as an earthquake), the majority of families and individuals on the island may be on their own for a lengthy period of time. We will more than likely experience the loss of telephones (including cell phones), loss of electrical power, loss of natural gas, and loss of ferry services. Landslides and downed power lines will block most of our roads. We will not be able to dial 911. The fire department will be restricted in the use of roads and will not be capable of responding to a large number of local emergencies simultaneously. The normal "first responders" will not be available.

Individuals on the island have the opportunity to prepare themselves, their families, and their neighbors in two ways.

CERT training will prepare volunteer individuals on the island as "interim first responders" in the event of a catastrophic disaster. Those who become CERT qualified can make a big difference in helping to minimize the effect of injuries to victims and damage to homes in the community. They will perform to the extent of their training until VIFR can be on the scene.

The first CERT class graduated with 16 members in October. A second one will begin as soon as 20 or more people sign up, probably in early February on Wednesday evenings. The training will cover the basic skills that are important for interim emergency personnel to possess. This will include fire suppression, medical such as first aid, light search and rescue, disaster psychology, and much more during the 40 hours of training. It is vitally important for Vashon community members to volunteer to take the CERT training. The goal is to train more than 150 persons as CERT members function as a three-member team where ever they are needed during an emergency.

A NERO is composed of untrained volunteers within a small neighborhood area that gathers together to get to know each other and understand the strengths and problems within their neighborhood. Neighbors pick a coordinator and a couple of backup coordinators to be the primary communicators during a disaster to get outside help if needed. The NERO defines the boundaries (within walking distance), assesses the area for hazards and concerns, develops a plan for checking on the residents of every home for injuries or problems, and distributes information such as a disaster booklet and supply lists for surviving comfortably without power, telephones and other essentials.

**NERO informational meetings** are starting this month in various times and places. A list of those interested in the next **CERT classes** is being gathered. For more information about these programs or to sign up for CERT training, call Joan Sells, 463-2605, email [Joanvash@aol.com](mailto:Joanvash@aol.com). or call Candy McCullough, 463-9935, email [cmccullough@vifr.org](mailto:cmccullough@vifr.org)

# How can I help my neighborhood if there is a disaster?

Prepare now with the help of NERO (Neighborhood Emergency Response Organization), a subcommittee of the Vashon Island Disaster Preparedness Committee.

The following are suggested steps to follow to organize your neighborhood.

1. **Sign up** to volunteer for your neighborhood by calling **Joan Sells, 463-2605, or email joanvash@aol.com**
2. **Gather your neighbors** together and select a **neighborhood coordinator** to be the organizer and main spokesperson during an emergency. Pick a **backup person** as well in case the coordinator is out of the neighborhood at the time of the emergency.
  - A. **Define the boundaries** of your neighborhood within a walking distance.
  - B. As a group, **assess the area** for potential problems and concerns, such as trees that might fall and block the road during an earthquake, etc.
  - C. **Pick volunteers** to check on the homes closest to theirs, probably 3 to 5 houses.
  - D. **Identify all homes** by recording the names, addresses, phone numbers (land lines and cell), numbers and ages of children, elderly, and special needs individuals, pets, and who is home during various time periods. Are there residents working away from home, off island, are they parttime residents such as weekenders or summer people or do they leave to go south during the winter months?
  - E. When this **information** is gathered, the volunteers will give it to **the coordinator** who will then know which homes are probably occupied during the particular time of the disaster.
3. The volunteers also may **hand out information** enabling residents to individually prepare for a disaster with suggested supplies and how to make their home safer before and during a disaster (turning off water, gas, etc.). Additional training will be available for neighborhoods that request it.
4. **If and when a disaster hits, the volunteers will check on their assigned homes** (and cover for other volunteers who may not be home at the time). Each volunteer will **then report to the coordinator**... either everyone is fine or someone is hurt or trapped and how seriously. In addition, the volunteers will report if there are power lines down, trees blocking the road, or other hazards.
5. The **coordinator** will gather this information and **report to the next level** of the plan, the area center, which will determine what resources are available and how to get help to the affected neighborhood.

**The first step is to step up and volunteer for your neighborhood.** We hope to have every area on Vashon and Maury Islands participating in a Neighbor Helping Neighbor plan. The above plan is only a suggestion and may be modified to suit the needs of each neighborhood.

**SIGN UP NOW**

## Seven Things To Do Right Now To Get Your Neighborhood Prepared For A Disaster

1. Gather your neighbors together to see who will help in an emergency
2. Define the boundaries of your neighborhood and evaluate it for hazards.
3. Pick a leader to spearhead the recruiting of "neighbors helping neighbors."
4. Learn about everyone in your neighborhood. Write it down for the leader.
5. Decide what materials each family wants so they can be prepared.
6. Pick three people (may include leader) to coordinate during a disaster and relay information to the next level if assistance is needed.
7. Plan to meet again in 3 months to see if everyone is ready and if anything has changed.

After these seven things have been done, call Joan Sells, 463-2605, if you need help, suggestions or materials (i.e. what each family should do to prepare).