

Neighborhood Emergency Planning and Exercise Program

Program Overview

Summary

Many neighborhoods in Boise are susceptible to the risk of an emergency or natural disaster that may require citizens to take protective actions to keep themselves safe, including the possibility of evacuating. One way our neighborhoods can mitigate the impacts of that risk is to be informed about what may impact their area, learn appropriate actions to take, and plan as a community to support neighbors. Community preparedness and resilience take deliberate planning across multiple levels including both at the city and down to our neighborhoods. This program aims to empower residents and create partnerships between first responders and Boise neighborhoods that may require evacuations or other protective actions because of a disaster or other emergency incident.

Neighborhoods will engage in deliberate emergency preparedness planning to prepare as a community and then engage with first responders on expectations during an incident. The culmination of the community planning effort will be an exercise with the opportunity to practice a notification and/or evacuation drill in the community with local first responders. This program takes an all-hazards approach to allow for any neighborhood within the city to participate. The program can be catered to the hazards and need of interested neighborhoods.

Funding Available

Costs associated with program activities such as plan development, exercise planning, and/or exercise execution are eligible for funding through the City of Boise's A.C.T. Grant program. Eligible costs can include printing and mailing, signage, meeting space, etc. Neighborhood Associations should include costs for this program as part of their application under the Community Service or Communications categories. Grant application periods open in July and January each fiscal year and have a $2500 cap per year. Due to the length of the performance period, alignment with the July application period is recommended for this program. More information on the A.C.T. Grant program is available at https://www.cityofboise.org/programs/energize/act-grants

Eligibility Requirements

- Be a recognized City of Boise Neighborhood Association in good standing. Other entities will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but no grant funding will be available to support those programs.

What to Expect

This is a community-driven effort supported by City resources. The program will likely be a 12-24 month process from initial application to completion of the exercise. Once chosen, the selected community begins deliberate community organizing and emergency plan building through the first year. Initial community meetings should be held during this time to introduce the program and general emergency preparedness and response principals to the community. Exercise planning in coordination with the city will begin in earnest in the Fall/Spring with the exercise scheduled for early to mid-summer timeframe of the second year. Timing may be adjusted due to resource availability.

Participating neighborhoods may select from several different exercise types, all with varying degrees of planning and involvement:

- Community notification drill: Simulated exercise incident notification and/or evacuation messaging sent to neighborhood residents registered through the Countywide emergency notification system. No further actions taken.
- Tabletop exercise: This is a discussion-based exercise where participants utilize a likely emergency scenario to talk through actions that would be taken.
- Community notification and evacuation exercise: First responders will simulate issuing incident notification and evacuation information. A subset of residents will respond to the notifications in real-time, taking actions as they would in a real-world event.

To begin exercise planning, the neighborhood association must be actively working towards meeting the following requirements:

- Must have concurrence/approval of emergency plan from Neighborhood Association board or other relevant governance entity completed by time of exercise as that is what will be tested
- More than 50% of residents are engaged in the program (as demonstrated through pods/blocks established)
- Community communications strategy identified

Application Process

This program will accept one neighborhood each year to support through the emergency planning and exercise process. Additional support to neighborhoods interested in less complex components may be available at the discretion of the City of Boise Emergency Preparedness Manager.

Applications will be accepted at any time and evaluated by a panel of City of Boise staff including first responder personnel. Neighborhood selection will be based on several factors including: current threat/hazard risk, planning already underway, level of exercise desired, and anticipated neighborhood resident participation rate. It is anticipated that one neighborhood will be selected as the primary applicant each year. An additional on-deck neighborhood may also be selected so initial planning can begin.

Program acceptance decisions will be made in January each of year. Once selected, City staff will reach out to schedule a meeting to discuss the process and timeline more in depth. Neighborhoods that are not selected will remain in the application pool for future reconsideration for as long as they are still interested. Applications may be updated and resubmitted at any time.

The program application can be found on page 6 of this packet. Applications should be submitted to: OEP@cityofboise.org

Application and Program Timeline

Anytime	•Program applications accepted
January (Year 1)	•Neigborhood selected by City of Boise staff •Initial planning meeting scheduled
February-July (Year 1)	•Initial community planning and project development by neigborhood
July-October (Year 1)	•ACT Grant application and award •Community planning ongoing
October-September (Year1>Year 2)	•Finalize Community Emergency Plan •Exercise planning with City staff

Resources Available

- Subject matter expertise – City resources are available to assist with planning, attend community meetings, and advise on relevant aspects of emergency notifications, evacuations, and emergency response.
- Peer support – The City can facilitate connections between neighborhoods to get on-the-ground feedback and best practices from other neighborhoods that have been or are currently a part of the program.
- City grant funds – As outlined above. Other grant funding may become available in the future.
- Planning Guides – See Reference section at the end of the toolkit for links to example plans and programs.

Have questions or need support?

Neighborhood representatives are encouraged to reach out to discuss the program in further detail. Contact Boise Office of Emergency Preparedness at OEP@cityofboise.org

Application

(Submit to oep@cityofboise.org)

- Neighborhood Association Name: _____
- Point of Contact
  - Name _____
  - Email _____
  - Phone Number _____
- Which aspects of the program is your community most likely interested in? (select all that apply)
  - ☐ Neighborhood emergency plan development
  - ☐ Tabletop exercise
  - ☐ Community notification drill (Test message sent to residents)
  - ☐ Community notification/evacuation drill with first responders
- What other community preparedness programs/initiatives has your neighborhood pursued or participated in: (select all that apply)
  - ☐ Firewise
  - ☐ Neighborhood Watch
  - ☐ Ready, Set, Go
  - ☐ Map Your Neighborhood
  - ☐ Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
  - ☐ Other _____
- Please provide a brief description of any disaster preparedness planning your neighborhood has already been engaged in:

_____

_____

_____

_____

- Has your Association already applied for an ACT Grant this fiscal year?

☐ YES ☐ NO

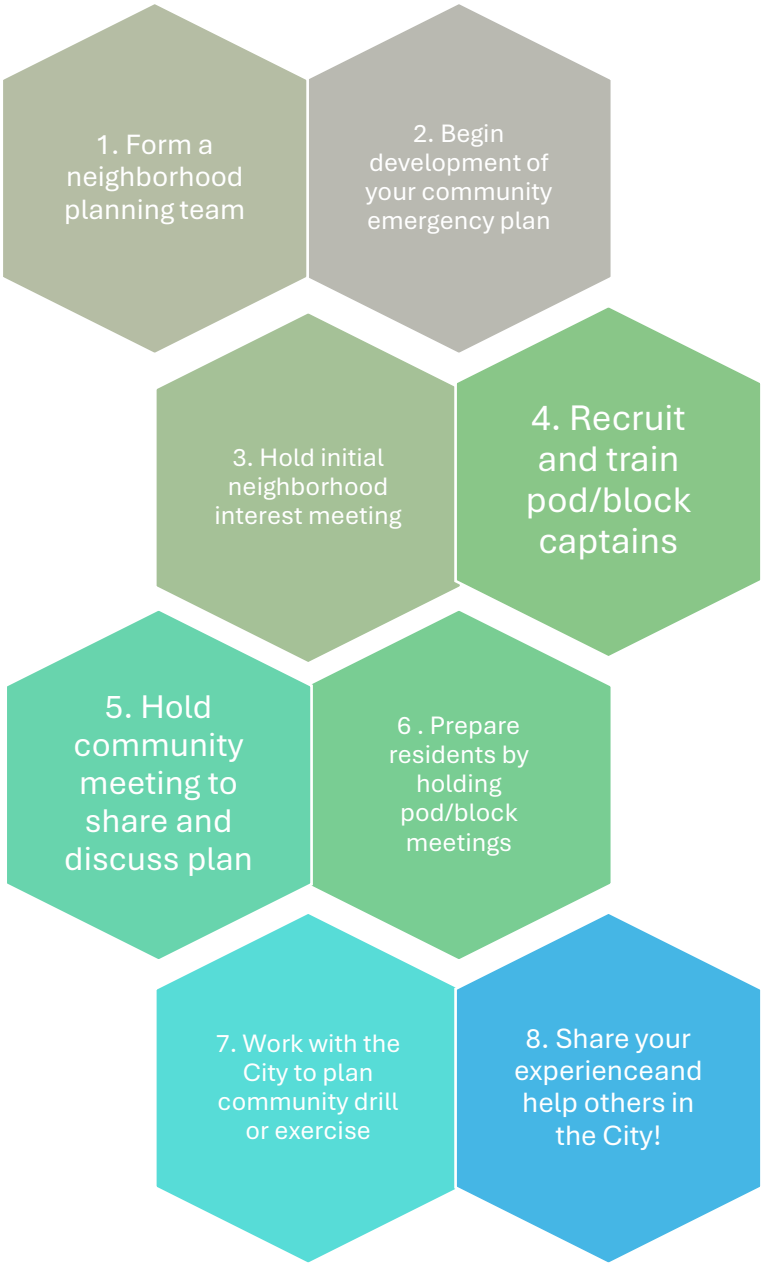
Emergency Planning Guide Toolkit

This Toolkit is intended for private, non-governmental use in our community. If you need assistance building your community plan or working through the process, please contact the City of Boise Office of Emergency Preparedness at OEP@cityofboise.org. This guide is intended to be part of a ***community-led effort*** *to increase citizen preparedness and resiliency across the city. Each neighborhood in our community is unique and so are the planning needs. The information in this guide is provided as a starting point for your planning; components included are based on local and national best practices. Your emergency plan should be developed to best meet the needs of your community.*

This Toolkit provides steps and best practices intended to help you organize your planning efforts, engage with the residents of your neighborhood, and build interest and support.

****Any Boise community should feel free to use this guide to assist them in emergency planning, regardless of whether they want to pursue the exercise program in the future. Neighborhoods are encouraged to start their emergency plan development ahead of applying for the exercise portion of the program. ****

Outlined below are the recommended steps to follow to best utilize this program. The following pages will provide additional guidance, best practices, and suggested tactics for each step to help make your community emergency planning effort a success.



Best Practices for Engaging Your Community

1 – FORM A NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING TEAM

Identify a small planning team that leads the effort, develops the community emergency plan, recruits and works with identified pod/block captains, and communicates with City resources. This is the group that will champion the effort within your community.

Divide and conquer by assigning roles and responsibilities within the team. Some examples include mapping lead, emergency communications lead, etc.

It is recommended to have this team be established as a sub-committee or similar sub-organizational structure to your neighborhood association board. This adds legitimacy to your effort and simplifies the grant process.

2 – BEGIN DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN

The community emergency plan can serve as the hub of your ongoing preparedness planning and resilience efforts. Begin sketching out what the contents of your plan will include. There is no required formatting, and your 'plan' does not have to live in one comprehensive document if all important elements are addressed. Recommended components include identifying potential hazards to your area; communications strategy including emergency alerting and notifications; ready, set, go protocols; personal preparedness recommendations, etc.

At this point in the process, it is also a good idea to consider mapping out your community and grouping residences into smaller sub-divisions (pods/blocks). Splitting your neighborhood into these smaller sets of homes allows for better accountability and can ease the communications burden during an event. Best practices from across the nation suggest that sub-dividing a community into smaller segments of 15-25 household pods is an effective strategy. Utilizing natural divisions like streets or blocks makes the process easier and aligns with neighbor-to-neighbor relationship that likely already exist.

Begin exploring options for community wide notification to be able to effectively communicate important information before and during a disaster. This may be something like an email list or phone tree to pod/block captains.

See the resources and references lists at the end of this document for links to other programs and websites that may inform your community planning effort.

3 – HOLD INITIAL NEIGHBORHOOD INTEREST MEETING

This is the opportunity to introduce the neighborhood preparedness program to your residents and gain buy-in and support. Provide an overview of the goal of engaging in this process, brief out on the planning team's effort thus far, and get feedback from residents.

Additionally, this meeting should be used as an initial opportunity to recruit captains for your pods/blocks.

4 – RECRUIT AND TRAIN POD/BLOCK CAPTAINS

Build on personal relationships already established within small neighborhood groups. Ideally there are primary and back-up captains for each identified pod/block.

Identify and discuss roles and responsibilities of pod/block captains. Specific roles and responsibilities can be developed to suit the needs of your community, but pod captains are generally responsible for canvasing their area and communicating with residents. This may include sharing information about the community emergency plan, disseminating information and checking on neighbors' status during an incident.

Schedule trainings/refreshers on a regular basis as new captains come on board or there are changes to your community's plan.

5 – COMMUNITY MEETING TO SHARE AND DISCUSS PLAN

Hold a second neighborhood meeting once your community emergency plan and neighborhood map are more established. Discuss the threats and hazards that may impact your area, present communications strategies, and identify community needs regarding emergency and evacuation planning.

This is a good time to Invite emergency services representatives to answer questions regarding what an incident and/or evacuation may look like in your neighborhood.

6 – PREPARE RESIDENTS BY HOLDING POD/BLOCK MEETINGS

Individual pod/block captains can hold meetings within their pod/block. This provides an opportunity for neighbors to meet each other and discuss any individual needs or concerns they may have during a disaster such as mobility issues, medical devices, or children and pets who may be at home alone.

Discuss general actions individuals and families can take be prepared for disasters such as having a 72-kit and a family communications plan.

Discuss signing up for emergency notifications and assist neighbors with ensuring they are appropriately signed up to receive alerts through the community mass notification system (https://alert.adacounty.id.gov/)

More broadly, the neighborhood association should post emergency preparedness and evacuation planning information on the Neighborhood Association website so all residents can access it.

7 – WORK WITH CITY TO PLAN COMMUNITY DRILL

Based on the complexity of the drill the community is interested in, City of Boise Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) with work with the neighborhood to select a date and time for the drill and provide assistance in developing neighborhood objectives and creating a scenario. OEP will also coordinate with emergency response departments as needed to support the drill. It is incumbent upon the neighborhood planning team to determine what level of participation the community will have.

Communicate information about the drill with residents including date, time, and what to expect. Both those that are participating and those that aren't should be well-informed about what will take place on the day of the exercise.

After the exercise, gather feedback from participants on how things went. This can be done via a 'Hot Wash' in-person immediately after the drill or by survey sent to participants later. Make sure to capture both things that worked well and as expected as well as document areas for improvement or where the plan didn't function as intended.

The feedback gathered from the exercise should then be utilized to update your community plans and procedures.

8 – SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE AND HELP OTHERS IN THE CITY!

As members of the community, neighborhoods that have worked through the community emergency planning process are best poised to assist others embarking on this program. The most valuable on-the-ground, first-hand experience is gained by doing the work in your own communities. Once your neighborhood has completed the program, City staff may reach out to get feedback on your experience and ask that you share your successes and challenges with others embarking on the process.

Additional Resources

The following additional resources may aid in your neighborhood's planning effort:

FEMA Ready.gov (www.ready.gov)

Ready Set Go (https://www.wildlandfirersg.org/)

Idaho Firewise (https://idahofirewise.org/)

FEMA Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT) (https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/resilience-analysis-and-planning-tool)

Map Your Neighborhood (https://mil.wa.gov/map-your-neighborhood)

Community Emergency Response Team Program

(https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/preparedness-activities-webinars/community-emergency-response-team)

Ada County Hazard Mitigation Plan (https://adacounty.id.gov/emergencymanagement/mitigation/)

References

The following documents and programs were used as reference material in the development of this planning guide:

- Fairfax County VA Community Emergency Response Guide
  https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/readyfairfax/cergplantemplates
- Map Your Neighborhood
  https://mil.wa.gov/map-your-neighborhood
- FEMA - Ready.gov
  www.ready.gov
- NYC Emergency Management Community Preparedness (Community Planning Toolkit)
  https://www.nyc.gov/assets/em/downloads/pdf/community_toolkit/community_planning_toolkit_2019.pdf
- City of Boise Ready, Set, Go!
  https://www.cityofboise.org/departments/fire/fire-prevention/fire-and-life-safety-education/emergency-preparedness/ready-set-go/
- Warm Springs Neighborhood Association MESA Program
  https://warmspringsmesa.org/wildfire-safety/mesa-program/