



## Map Your Neighborhood

Courtesy of the Washington State Emergency Preparedness Management Division  
and Sun Oven International

– Remember –

*In a disaster your most immediate source of help  
are the neighbors living around you.*



## Map Your Neighborhood

Neighborhoods that are prepared for emergencies and disaster situations save lives, reduce the severity of injuries and trauma, and reduce property damage. In addition, contributing as an individual and working together as a team helps develop stronger communities and improve the quality of life in the community. A disaster is any event that overwhelm the capacity of 9-1-1 emergency responders (fire, medical, police and utility personnel). Often rational thought goes out the window during a disaster. Here are 9 steps to do that are necessary and effective in caring first for our individual homes and then our neighborhoods.

1. **Take care of home** – Our first response should be in caring for our own homes. The better prepared we are at home the sooner we will be able to help with the needs of our neighborhood.
2. **Protect your head, hands & feet** – Dress yourself for safety. Protect your head with a hard hat or bicycle helmet to protect against falling debris. Protect your feet with sturdy shoes to avoid cut feet. Protect your hands by leather gloves to minimize cuts from broken glass and contaminants that may cause sickness later. Keep these items under your bed so you will always know where they are. Wear long pants and long sleeve shirts when going to help others. Goggles, a dust mask and a small first aid kit are also helpful.

3. **Shut off natural gas to your home** – shutting off natural gas and propane gas eliminates the most common fuel sources for residential fires following disasters. To shut off natural gas – turn the valve 1/4 turn in either direction so that the valve crosses the pipe. Keep a crescent wrench right by your meter. To shut off propane, turn the shut-off valve to the right until it closes completely. Be sure to shut off the gas if you smell an odor like rotten eggs or hear it hissing as it escapes from broken pipes. Remember, once the gas is shut off, only someone from the gas company should turn it back on. They are the only ones qualified to relight your pilot lights and inspect pipes for leaks.
4. **Shut off water at the house main** – shutting off the water at the house will help keep water in the water heater available for drinking, food preparation and hygiene. With broken pipes, gravity may drain water out of the water heater and toilet tanks. Cracked pipes may allow contaminants into the water supply. Shutting off the water at the meter outside your house requires a special tool and is very difficult to do.
5. **Post OK/Help cards** – keep three sheets of colored card stock with your 72 hour kit. Immediately following a disaster, each household should evaluate their injuries and medical needs. Using the following descriptions of each color, place one of them on the front of your house where it can be easily seen from the street. Red – immediate need of attention; Yellow – delayed need of attention; Green – no need for medical attention or other immediate assistance. Every home should be checked.
6. **Put fire extinguishers on sidewalk or street edge** – fires can be a big problem during times of disaster because fire departments may not be available. Placing fire extinguishers outside makes them visible and available for use in the neighborhood. Only place them outside following the disaster. If fire is too large, do not attempt to put it out. Evacuate quickly. When using an extinguisher, remember PASS: Pull the pin, aim at base of fire, squeeze handle, sweep side to side.
7. **Check in at the neighborhood gathering site** – this is the place where all of us will gather after we have completed steps 1-6 at our own homes. To help keep chaos to a minimum, we will want to check in at this pre-determined place in the neighborhood. It should be covered in case of rain and readily visible. Next select a Neighborhood Care Center, a place where those who are elderly and those with disabilities can be brought. Be sure to record this address in your handout materials.
8. **Team Assignments** – Now is the time in the disaster response to come together as a neighborhood. As we get together at the gathering site, we can see who is available to help. We will be able to assign groups of neighbors to do four (4) critical tasks. Remember to always go in teams of at least two for safety and protection. Team One will stay at the Neighborhood Gathering Site and listen for emergency information on either AM/FM radio or a NOAA Radio. Team Two will go and check on all those we have identified who need to be checked on immediately. Team Three will check all natural gas meters and propane tanks. If they smell gas or hear it hissing from broken pipes, they will shut it

off. Team Four – will go door to door checking for all Help cards and homes with no cards. They will coordinate giving the help and assistance that is needed. Be sure to take a first aid kit with them.

9. **Return and Report** – when each team has completed its assignment, it will report back to the Neighborhood Gathering Site and report what they have done. As information is shared, the entire neighborhood will know what has happened and what the response has been. If additional help is required, plans can be devised to respond to those needs. Plan a practice drill at least once a year. This practice will help us develop confidence and competence in responding to disasters when they occur.

### **References**

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4. <https://www.ready.gov/community-preparedness-toolkit>
5. <https://mil.wa.gov/emergency-management-division/preparedness/map-your-neighborhood>
6. <http://momprepares.com/start-a-disaster-preparedness-group-in-your-neighborhood/>

Billie Nicholson, Editor  
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