



Date: June 29, 2018

To: Patrick West, City Manager *P.W.*

From: Reginald Harrison, Director of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Communications *R.H.*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Disaster Preparedness News Article**

Attached is a recent news article that summarizes the City's disaster preparedness accomplishments and highlights things residents can do to protect their family and property in the event of a major emergency or disaster.

Additional information on other disaster preparedness topics is available on the City's Disaster Preparedness website at www.longbeach.gov/disasterpreparedness. Staff is also available to discuss disaster preparedness programs at community meetings. Please contact Reggie Harrison, Director of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Communications at extension 89460 for additional information.

Attachment

Cc: CHARLES PARKIN, CITY ATTORNEY
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DEPARTMENT HEADS

Filed under Commentary

Commentary: Are you prepared for a disaster?

Reggie Harrison, Director Disaster Preparedness Long Beach • June 28, 2018 • [Leave a Comment](#)



REGGIE HARRISON



Director Disaster Preparedness Long Beach

News reports about natural and man-made disasters have dominated the headlines of late. Each disaster serves as a reminder to the city of Long Beach and its residents how important it is to “be prepared” while at home and work for a disaster.

One of my takeaways from the recent disasters is just how quickly the public tends to respond when disasters occur. This was true during the fires and mudslides in northern California, where residents became the initial “first responders” by going to the homes of elderly neighbors to warn them of the impending danger and to provide aid and assistance to one another. In the Las Vegas mass shooting, it was fellow concert-goers who first provided emergency medical treatment to the victims. During recent hurricanes, neighbors in motor boats, canoes and even paddleboards were first on the scene

to aid fellow residents trapped by the rising water.

Fortunately, the City of Long Beach offers various training programs and resources to residents to learn strategies that can be useful during a disaster.

Get trained!

Long Beach offers Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training to residents who want to be trained to respond during emergency situations while police and firefighters are enroute to the scene. The Long Beach Fire Department-led CERT program has educated over 5,000 residents about disaster preparedness and basic disaster-response skills, fire safety and emergency medical techniques.

Most recently, a teen CERT course was added for youth to learn how to be better prepared. Similarly, the Long Beach Chapter of the American Red Cross and Long Beach Search and Rescue offer training in disaster-support services, including basic first aid, CPR and light search-and-rescue procedures.

What's going on?

A second takeaway from the recent disasters is that providing timely, concise and consistent emergency messages and warnings to the public can and will save lives. Alert Long Beach (ALB) is the primary mass notification system that the City uses to notify residents of major emergencies. This free notification system provides the public with important information before, during and after a major emergency. Residents and businesses who sign up for ALB on the City's website (longbeach.gov/pages/city-news/sign-up-now-for-alertlongbeach) are sent emergency alerts to home phones, cell phones, email addresses and text devices. In addition to ALB, the City utilizes CERT volunteers, public-safety personnel, television, radio, social media and amateur radio operators to alert the public, when necessary.

Annual resource expos and drills

Another good resource to help residents prepare for a disaster is the Ready Long Beach (RLB) community emergency preparedness expo held annually in September. RLB features emergency-preparedness demonstrations and showcases a variety of emergency foods, supplies and equipment that residents should have ready in the event of a disaster. Information booths and activities teach kids and families how to sterilize water for safe drinking and to use household supplies to help them be self-sufficient for up to seven days after a disaster. Additionally, in March the City conducts an annual Tsunami Walk and Resource Fair, and each October all residents are encouraged to participate in the Great California ShakeOut Earthquake Drill.

Know your neighborhood

The Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) program provides another way to be prepared and know what risks and resources are available in your neighborhood. MYN provides a step-by-step process for residents to prepare their neighborhoods for emergencies. Through MYN, residents learn how to: complete an inventory of the skills and equipment that each neighbor has for use during a disaster; create a neighborhood map that identifies the location of resources and risks in the area for quick response; and create a contact list that identifies neighbors with specific needs such as young children, residents who are elderly and neighbors who are mobility-impaired.

Disaster Planning 101

Finally, disaster preparedness begins with you– the personal preparedness of our residents and businesses. Residents are strongly encouraged to prepare their homes and worksites for a disaster by having “go kits” with enough food, water and supplies to last at least seven days following a disaster.

While an earthquake is Long Beach’s most probable disaster, we should also be prepared for tsunamis, floods, windstorms and more. Therefore, our emergency plans and training must be designed to adapt to “all hazards” whether they be natural, man-made, biological or a national security emergency.

As part of our community outreach, the City has prepared informational material for use by residents and businesses, and staff is available to make community presentations as needed. For additional information, residents should visit the City’s Disaster Preparedness website at longbeach.gov/disasterpreparedness.

Reggie Harrison is a Long Beach resident and the director of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Communications for the City of Long Beach.