

Creating a Neighbour- to-Neighbour Preparedness Plan



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‘Neighbours helping neighbours’ is at the core of the Connect and Prepare program. During an emergency, your neighbours are often your first responders. Communities that are more connected are more resilient and recover more quickly from emergencies. Connectedness between neighbours is critical for everyday preparedness and resilience and helps make neighbourhoods safe, comfortable places to live.

By using this **guide**, you will connect with your neighbours to learn each others’ assets, skills and vulnerabilities as well as develop a plan to help each other during an emergency. Knowing what to do will help reduce anxiety and keep everyone safe and focused during an emergency. Emergencies you and your neighbours can experience may include structure fire, earthquake, tsunami, severe weather, power outage, infectious disease, gas leak or other disturbances. No matter the scale, this guide can be used to outline how you and your neighbours will stay connected and help each other. Use this with the **Neighbour-to-Neighbour Preparedness Plan Template** (<https://www.resilientneighbourhoods.ca/2021/NTN-Plan.pdf>) to create your own plan!



Gathering Information

This plan will likely be made by a small committee of neighbours, but you will need information and input from as many neighbours as possible. Hosting a ‘Party with a Purpose’ such as a BBQ or potluck to discuss emergency planning is a great way to connect and prepare. Another option is for a couple of neighbours to go door to door. Use the [Neighbour-to-Neighbour Chat](https://www.resilientneighbourhoods.ca/2021/NTN-Chat.pdf) (https://www.resilientneighbourhoods.ca/2021/NTN-Chat.pdf)to gather the information needed for this plan. You may even want to do a combination of these things to reach as many people as possible!

Neighbour Contact List

Neighbourhoods are filled with people of different backgrounds, hobbies, and skills. Many also have special considerations and may require assistance – i.e. young children, pets, mobility challenges, etc. Knowing these skills, assets and vulnerabilities is the first step in understanding how you can help each other during an emergency. One or two neighbours will need to manage and update this list as people move in and out of your neighbourhood. As a group, decide which information you wish to share with the entire neighbourhood, and which for privacy reasons, you may only want the coordinators to have.

You don’t have to be a professional emergency responder, everyone has useful skills and knowledge that can help their family and neighbours during an emergency. Think about your jobs and hobbies and how those skills can transfer to an emergency situation. These can include the following:

- First Aid and other health/wellness skills
- Organizing and leadership skills
- Camping experience, outdoor skills, cooking, food preserving skills
- Handyperson, electrical, plumbing, construction, carpentry skills
- Child care, pet care, elder care skills
- Other:

Consider gathering the following information from each household:

Unit Number:	Skills/resources:
Name(s):	Emergency role:
Phone:	Pets:
Email:	Other notes:

Special Considerations & Needs

Knowing more about your neighbours before an emergency will help you to better assist them during an emergency. Some of this may be sensitive information not freely given, getting to know your neighbours more and building trust between you will help bridge that gap.

Communication needs, for example: sign language, hearing aids, large print, other languages, etc.

Medical/Health: information about needed medications, medical equipment and supplies, mobility concerns, other health issues or concerns

Independence: information about assistive equipment, medical supplies

Supervision and support: information about needed support, ie. Family members, care provider, home support worker, etc.

Transportation: information about accessible transportation needs, will you need help to evacuate, etc.

Responsibilities

During an emergency, it can be challenging to think clearly and act quickly. Identifying skills and assigning roles before an emergency will help you and your neighbours work together effectively during a response. On the following page is a list of possible responsibilities you may wish to assign ahead of an emergency. As we know, there can be a variety of different types of emergencies varying in scale. Whether it is a sudden event such as a windstorm or structure fire or a more slow-moving event such as a heat wave or disease outbreak, these general roles can be adapted to the emergency. Roles should be assigned based on your neighbours' skills and assets and may depend on your building/street size and makeup. You may wish to combine roles, or you may wish to add others based on your needs and vulnerabilities.

Record each person's role on the **Contact List** and **Asset Map** in the **Neighbour-to-Neighbour Plan Template** (<https://www.resilientneighbourhoods.ca/2021/NTN-Plan.pdf>).



LEAD COORDINATOR

- Responsible for supporting and/or directing other coordinators, identifying what needs to be done at what time to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all residents.
- Should have the Neighbourhood Contact List with inventory of residents (including those with mobility issues) and pets.
- Should know who can turn off utilities and where they are located.
- As necessary, act as a liaison for gathering and communicating information with trusted agencies.



FLOOR OR ZONE COORDINATORS

- Responsible for accounting for individuals on their floor or within their pre-identified zone.
- Checking in on neighbours, responsible for assisting or directing others to assist those in their zone who need help or can offer help.
- Communicate any issues to Lead Coordinator.
- Coordinators should know who is responsible for inspecting and assessing the building or complex and how to get in touch with them.



FIRST-AID ATTENDANTS

- Gather at an accessible location to attend to those who need medical assistance.
- Work with the Lead Coordinator to request emergency personnel if necessary and direct them where to meet.



INFORMATION TEAM

- Listen to the radio and monitor other trusted information sources for emergency updates and share information with your neighbours.
- Work with Coordinators to ensure accurate information shared with residents and vice versa. Newsletters, bulletin boards, and email lists are great ways to stay connected and informed before, during, and after an emergency.
- Have important contact information handy such as landlord, building manager or strata corporation phone number and email, non-emergency services, etc.



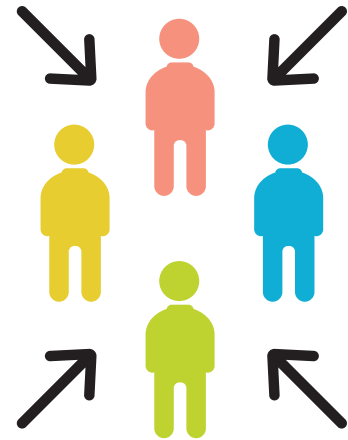
FIXING AND CLEANING UP

- Assist others in securing their residences, boarding up windows and removing debris
- Do not enter buildings or residences that could be unsafe. For instance, beware of electrical wires and outlets under water, as well as facades and insecure items that could give way, particularly in an aftershock.

Meeting Point

In an emergency, you, your family and your neighbours should **gather at a predetermined safe meeting point** to evaluate the situation and what needs to be done. This should be an outdoor location easily accessed, clearly describable and visible. Consider the list of hazards your neighbourhood might be impacted by.

Will this location be safe? Think of things like the potential for damage from buildings or power lines. It may be the middle of a quiet street, a bus stop or a park across the road. This location is not intended for long-term use, simply a space for neighbours to reconnect immediately following an emergency and plan their next steps. You may even need multiple locations for different hazards.



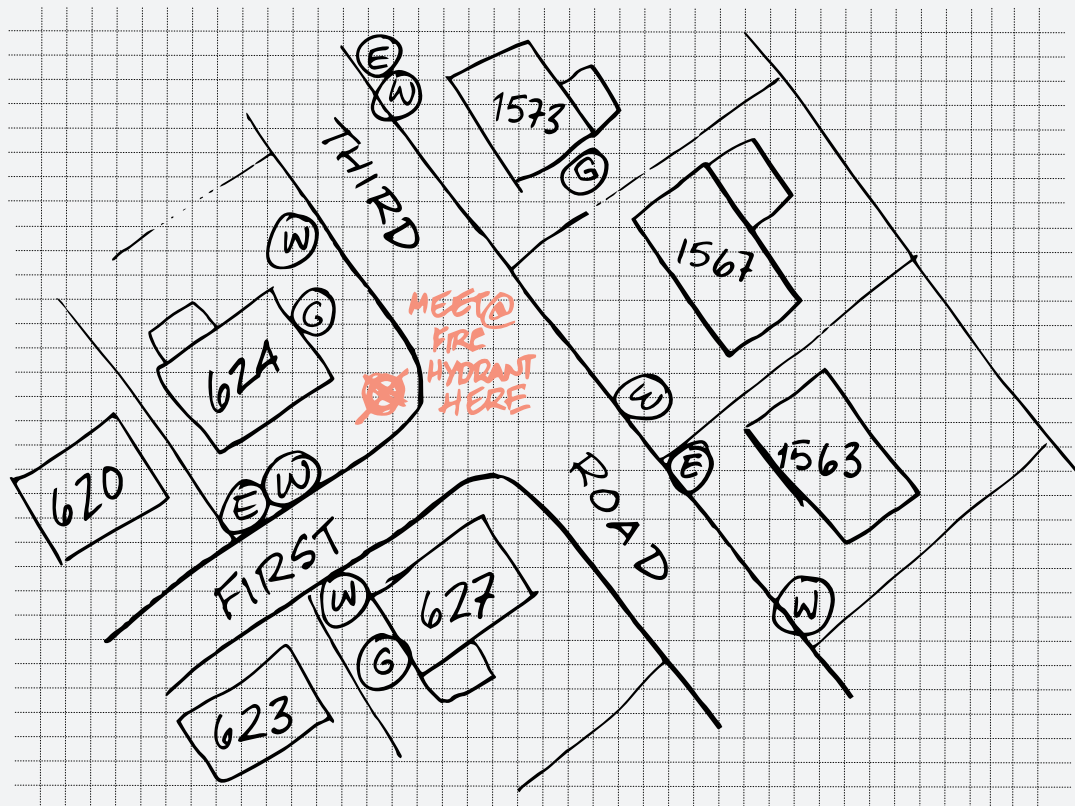
Asset Map

Use the space in the **Neighbour-to-Neighbour Plan Template** (<https://www.resilientneighbourhoods.ca/2021/NTN-Plan.pdf>) to identify the following:

- An outline of your street, floor or zone with the unit number of participating households
- Units or houses that might require extra assistance
- Units or houses of Floor or Zone Coordinator, first-aid attendants, etc
- Location of shared emergency supplies
- Shut-off valves – gas, electricity, water
- Your street/building and your safe meeting locations
- Known hazards
- Possible evacuation routes
- Other key resources or vulnerabilities identified in your planning

VicMap or Google Maps are great tools to use as a base for your **Asset Map**. On VicMap you can also find useful information such as the location of the Tsunami Inundation Zones, bike lanes, and city facilities. VicMap linked [here](https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/online-services/maps.html) (<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/online-services/maps.html>).

Asset Map Example:



You can use these symbols to mark the location of utilities:

(E) Electricity (W) Water (G) Gas



Don't forget to mark the meeting point locations on your map!

Communication Plan

Having a system in place for how to connect will be integral to neighbours helping each other in an emergency. Communications will include disseminating information from trusted sources as well as gathering information on who needs help. Here are a few examples:



Starting a WhatsApp group with your neighbours can be a very quick and easy way to communicate with everyone at once.



An email list or phone tree could be another way to disseminate information and could be coordinated by the Information Team.



A private Facebook group is also a great way to stay connected before, during and after an emergency.

There are many options, so choose what works best for you and your neighbours. Remember that not everyone has access to or is comfortable with technology and social media. Also, depending on the emergency you may not have access to power, phone lines, cell service and/or internet. It is always a good idea to have backups and redundancies. Some more examples include:

- Distributing notices door to door – this is a good way to check in on neighbours and ensure that they are okay and aware of available resources.
- A bulletin board in a public space such as the laundry or mail room is a great way to have a physical location for people to check for updates.

Buddy System

Setting up a “buddy system” with two to four units or households can be a good way to check on and get assistance from your immediate neighbours during small or large emergencies. You may wish to exchange the following information to be more prepared to help each other in an emergency:

- Contact information
- Emergency contact information
- Skills/resources
- Pets
- Special considerations
- Location of keys, shut off valves, etc.

In the Event of an Emergency

During an emergency neighbours should check-in with each other and can ask the following questions:

🗨️

Are you aware of the situation?

🗨️

Are you at home or elsewhere?

🗨️

Do you need anything?

Shared Emergency Supplies

It is important for everyone to be individually prepared for emergencies, however due to constraints in time, space, and money this is not always easy. Having a collection of shared supplies can help neighbours be collectively prepared. Have everyone chip in or apply for a grant such as the **City of Victoria's My Great Neighbourhood Grant** (<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/neighbourhoods/my-great-neighbourhood-grant-program.html>).

First, find out what skills and supplies individuals and families might be willing to share with their neighbours. From there you can find out what's missing and what supplies should be in the shared emergency kit. Use the **Neighbour-to-Neighbour Chat** (<https://www.resilientneighbourhoods.ca/2021/NTN-Chat.pdf>) to help!

Then decide where the supplies will be kept, how to access them, and who will be responsible for maintaining them.



Safety Tips

Here is a list of safety tips that everyone should be mindful of. Feel free to add your own that are specific to your street or building.

1. In the event of an emergency, do not use elevators.
2. If your power goes out, know how to navigate your complex without electronic access or lighting.
3. Do not use BBQs or camp stoves inside your unit following a disaster.
4. Fire alarms and sprinklers may go off: do not panic!
5. Do not flush toilets in case water lines are damaged.

Plan Updates

Your **Neighbour-to-Neighbour Preparedness Plan** should be updated annually, after a drill such as ShakeOutBC, or as residents move in or out of the neighbourhood. Identify someone who will be responsible for organizing a review and update of the plan. Organizing an annual BBQ or potluck is a great way to have a ‘party with a purpose’ – connect as neighbours and update your plan!

Consider creating a package for new residents that includes the **Neighbour-to-Neighbour Preparedness Plan**, individual preparedness information (such as the Household Hazard Hunt, Emergency Checklists, etc.) and any other relevant information for your street or building. Identify who will welcome new residents and provide this information.