1.9 Community emergency response plans

Folder with resources and templates: 📷 1.9 Community emergency response plans

Before disaster

- ☐ Identify if there are already local documents outlining the emergency response plan for your town and town's leaders during an emergency:
    - ☐ Emergency Management Director (EMD): plans for/leads disaster response; develops, updates, and implements local emergency management plan (LEMPs).
    - ☐ Fire Department: often first line of disaster rescue, sometimes helps with recovery. May have machinery for vehicle extraction.
    - ☐ First Responders/Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
    - ☐ Town Clerk/Administrator/Manager, Select Board Members
    - ☐ Town Road Crew
    - ☐ Mutual Aid and/or Neighbor-to-Neighbor Network leader(s)
- ☐ Create a directory of emergency managers, municipal leaders, heads of neighbor-to-neighbor groups, etc. that will be used to coordinate and communicate at the town-wide level. Places to gather information: The **911 EMS agency** that covers any given town should have a list of local first-responders.
    - ☐ In the event that the ambulance comes from several towns away, there may be local first-responders, including the fire department, who are linked in with the EMS agency responsible for covering your town more immediately.
- ☐ Share this directory with everyone listed in it, or organize an event where everyone can meet one another and strategize/role play around what they do when disaster strikes
- ☐ Create a clear communication system specifically for emergency response
- ☐ Organize neighborhood pods with block captain/phone tree systems if there is phone service
- ☐ Create a directory of neighbors with street addresses, landline contacts, etc.
- ☐ Create a directory of local first responders, paid and volunteer
- ☐ Identify people trained in HAM radio
- ☐ Identify an evacuation plan and options for sheltering nearby if evacuation is not possible.
- ☐ Create a plan for volunteers to physically sweep known problem areas - EMS does not monitor these!
- ☐ Identify a core team of people to do pre-outreach by town or volunteer/supply hub to share information about preparedness, and distribute info on available resources and where to direct needs.
- ☐ If there is none, establish a neighbor-to-neighbor or mutual aid group in your town. Consider partnering with an existing group that already holds a lot of relationships. EMS and some municipalities often have lists of vulnerable people. Make sure those folk are known to the neighbor-to-neighbor group.
- ☐ Identify language access needs and utilize tools like the GoogleTranslate to support communication during emergencies. The VT Language Justice Project app can also be used to share informational videos in individuals' language. See Section 1.8 for info on populations with specific needs.

During disaster

- ☐ Hold daily meetings w/ key stakeholders (Mutual Aid Orgs, EMS, EMD, selectboard, etc) and create situation reports about actions taken during emergency response
- ☐ Hold regular public assemblies at an accessible time/place; share easy to absorb information; distribute other things people need (food, water, fuel). Advertise assemblies with posters and by word of mouth. If you have access to the internet and phone service, utilize phone trees, Front Porch Forum, social media, and local listservs/messaging threads.
- ☐ Create hand-outs/digital surveys to capture requests from impacted residents, which integrate into a tracker for case management

- [ ] Use weather maps at waterdata.usgs.gov/vt/nwis/rt and the [River Aware app,](River%20Aware%20app) Identify people to look at the river and watch for ice and debris dams.
- [ ] Receive/submit alerts at vem.vermont.gov/vtalert and TextMyGov.

Planning for other kinds of climate disaster

While flooding is VT's most common climate disaster, consider other potential events in emergency plans:

- [ ] **Wildfire smoke**: prolonged exposure to wildfire smoke can cause respiratory issues and other health problems.
    - [ ] Monitor air quality levels via AirNow.gov
    - [ ] Store N95s/KN95s/respirators along with other emergency supplies to protect people from dangerous air quality ([1.3](1.3))
    - [ ] Identify public spaces with air filtration if you do not have air filtration at home like libraries, schools, health centers (similar to warming and cooling shelters, [1.5](1.5)).
- [ ] **Wet bulb temperatures & High Heat Index:** a hazardous combination of high heat and high humidity. Above around 86ºF plus high humidity can create wet bulb conditions.
    - [ ] Communicate across community networks and public information channels when heat advisories are in effect ([1.9](1.9))
    - [ ] Remind people about the importance of hydration; create access to drinking water in public places on hot days by putting out water coolers and signage ([1.2](1.2))
    - [ ] Especially during the hottest part of the day (11am - 3pm), stay in the shade or in other cool locations, including cooling shelters ([1.5](1.5)).
    - [ ] Learn the signs of, and communicate about, heat exhaustion (headache, fever, dizziness, fainting, shallow breathing, increased thirst, muscle aches, and nausea).
- [ ] **Drought:** Unlike other weather-related disasters, drought often comes on slowly in our region.
    - [ ] Monitor fire danger to protect people, buildings, and ecosystems from preventable fire damage during drought conditions: fpr.vermont.gov/forest/wildland-fire/monitoring-fire-danger
    - [ ] Cut back on watering lawns and non-food plants; turn off taps; reduce toilet flushing.
- [ ] **Ice & Wind storms** can take out power lines, and in turn, heat and cooling.
    - [ ] At home, store emergency food that does not need electricity to prepare and water on hand ([1.2](1.2)), and back-up power/heating ([1.4](1.4))
    - [ ] If staying home is not safe, leave home before travel conditions worsen. Identify local warming and cooling shelters ([1.5](1.5)) ahead of the storm
    - [ ] Consider back-up communications (radios, walkies, default meetup plans) as electricity, wifi and phones may go down ([1.9](1.9); [2.2](2.2))
- [ ] **Public health emergencies and pandemics**
    - [ ] Emergent public health threats can be difficult to plan for, but keeping people healthy can protect communities from the worst impacts of pandemics and other health emergencies. See [Section 2.1](Section%202.1) of the toolkit for information on meeting basic needs, including health needs.
    - [ ] Creating community emergency response plans ([1.9](1.9)) beforehand, plans to support populations with specific needs ([1.8](1.8)), and setting up mutual aid networks ([1.12](1.12)) can increase community resilience amid public health crises.
    - [ ] Stay updated with new information coming from local, state, or federal government sources, as well as public health officials and experts in your community. Hold community gatherings ([2.3](2.3)) to share information.

Also consider planning for disasters that include increased military presence or heightened risk of violence.