

Be Ready — It's Easier Than You Think by Paul Pitlick

California has earthquakes and fires, so it is worth reviewing disaster preparation locally. The City of Palo Alto has made preparations, with professional staff in the **Office of Emergency Services (OES)** and many volunteers. You don't need a bunker in the backyard — most of what keeps a family safe takes **an afternoon, not a lifestyle**. The steps below run quickest first — step one takes two minutes. Do the rest whenever you get to them.

1. Sign up for alerts 2 MINUTES

The quickest thing on this page. Register for the City's Emergency Alerts so official warnings reach you directly, without having to watch the news. This same City page is the hub for everything else below.

LINK <https://www.paloalto.gov/Departments/Emergency-Services/Emergency-Preparedness>



2. Make a plan 15 MINUTES

Next, a short conversation at the kitchen table. Ready.gov can help you organize. An earthquake may happen during the day, when family members are at work or school — it will be important to plan where to meet up. Also remember that utilities and cell phones may not be functioning afterward, so agree now on an out-of-area contact.

LINK ready.gov/plan



3. Build a kit ONE SHOPPING TRIP

Now the one errand. The time to organize disaster supplies is before the event, not during or after. Water, food, flashlight, radio, medications, and copies of important documents.

Neighborhood tip: keep a spare pair of shoes or flip-flops under the bed. If an earthquake happens at night, you may have to walk near broken windows.

LINK ready.gov/kit



4. Go deeper whenever you like NO DEADLINE

With the first three done, you're in good shape. When you want more, Palo Alto Neighborhoods maintains a comprehensive Palo Alto Ready page — browse it at your own pace.

LINK paneighborhoods.org/paloaltoready



One more thing: plan ahead for medical needs

If someone in the house has a medical condition requiring electricity for life-saving equipment, or oxygen, we suggest a backup device or generator and/or a spare oxygen tank. Prior to a disaster, arrange for a family member, friend, or neighbor to be prepared to help in an emergency.

Print your OK / HELP signs today

Print them, then put them away until needed. After a disaster, check your own house. If things are in order, put the OK side in a front window or another place we can see from the street; if there are problems, display the HELP side. It tells responders in seconds which houses to skip and which to reach first. (Available in three languages.)

LINK cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/oes/npc-bpc/help_ok-3-lang-2020march.pdf



Stay connected: join the OPANA Google Group



The Old Palo Alto Neighborhood Association keeps neighbors informed about issues affecting our streets — development, traffic, safety, emergency preparedness, and neighborhood events. It is a low-volume way to know what is going on nearby. To request to join, email opana_news@googlegroups.com or nadianaik@gmail.com.

Want to help your block? Turn over. →



Get Involved — Pick the Role That Fits Your Life by Paul Pitlick

After a major disaster, the first help most people get comes from the people next door. Alongside professional staff, there are volunteer opportunities with the City's **Office of Emergency Services (OES)** — and the system only works when neighbors sign up. **You don't have to take the biggest role.** Start where you're comfortable.

Block Preparedness Coordinator (BPC) IN-PERSON OR ONLINE COURSE

You become your block's set of eyes. Immediately after a major disaster such as an earthquake, the BPC assesses their own block for building damage, injured people, and utility problems. BPCs have walkie-talkies (FRS radio), which in a disaster may be the only way to communicate. After assessing their areas, BPCs report to our Neighborhood Preparedness Coordinator (NPC). To prepare, the BPC buys a walkie-talkie and takes a 3-hour course with OES; an online training module is also available.

Best for: someone who wants to be the reliable point person for their street.

Assistant Block Preparedness Coordinator (ABPC) LIGHTEST COMMITMENT

Perfect if you want to help but aren't ready to buy equipment or take the full course. Four friends in my neighborhood chose exactly this. Each has their own block; after they assess it they report to me, and I pass it on to the Neighborhood Preparedness Coordinator with my own report, over my walkie-talkie (FRS radio). No walkie-talkie to buy, no classroom time required.

Best for: neighbors who want a clear, useful job without a big lift. If you'd like to work with me — or with another BPC who has their own walkie-talkie — we can arrange that. Contact info is below.

PROGRAM <https://www.paloalto.gov/Departments/Emergency-Services/Emergency-Volunteers/NPCBPC>

ONLINE MODULE [paloalto.gov/Departments/Emergency-Services/Become-a-Block-Preparedness-Coordinator-BPC-Online-Module](https://www.paloalto.gov/Departments/Emergency-Services/Become-a-Block-Preparedness-Coordinator-BPC-Online-Module)



Program



Online module

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) 20+ HOURS TRAINING

CERTs support local governments with disaster mitigation and help communities prepare for and recover from disasters. Before a disaster, CERTs train community members to prepare. During one, they assist first responders with fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Qualifications: attend the 20+ hour CERT training and take part in drills and refresher courses.

Best for: anyone who wants hands-on skills. Also a strong fit for a high school student looking for a community service project — this might be something we could work on with you.

LINK <https://www.paloalto.gov/Departments/Emergency-Services/Emergency-Volunteers/CERT>



CERT info

Not sure which one? Just ask.

Happy to talk it through with no commitment — please visit oldpaloalto.com/contact.php



Contact

Old Palo Alto's own emergency preparedness page

Our neighborhood website has a page devoted entirely to emergency preparedness, gathering local guidance and links in one place — a great resource whether you are just getting started or want to go further. Visit oldpaloalto.com

