



Guide to Emergency Planning for Communities



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Why Plan for Emergencies?

Over the last several years, Anne Arundel County has experienced severe weather events to include snow storms, flash flooding, severe thunderstorms, high winds, and extreme temperature conditions. These types of challenges can greatly affect our daily routine and impinge on our quality of life. Developing a Community Emergency Plan is great way to help your community respond to and recover quickly following an emergency or disaster making your community resilient. Develop your Community Emergency Plan today, by using *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

Resilient communities:

- Are aware of risks which may affect them and how vulnerable they are to them;
- Use their existing skills, knowledge, and resources to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the consequences associated with emergencies or disasters; and
- Work together to complement the work of the local first responders before, during, and after an emergency or disaster.

Communities can become better prepared and equipped to face challenges by:

- Assessing the risks or hazards which may affect or impact their community;
- Using the skills, knowledge, and resources within the community to help, prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency or disaster; and
- Preparing the community members, families, and homes within the community for all hazards.

Developing your Plan

How to Use the Community Emergency Plan Template

The Community Emergency Plan Template takes you through a step-by-step process, which will enable you to:

- Identify the scope of your community and audience;
- Think of the risks or hazards your community faces;
- Identify community members with special skills, knowledge, and resources;
- Form a Community Emergency Group and involve as many people who can help; and
- Write and test your Community Emergency Plan.

Anne Arundel County's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) can offer support and provide guidance throughout the planning process. Contact details for Anne Arundel County's OEM are listed on *Page 13*.



Organize a Community Emergency Group Meeting, see *Step 1* in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

Who Is the Plan's Intended Audience?

Community Emergency Plans are generally based on a geographical area. This may include one or more communities, a neighborhood, a single street, or community members who are connected by shared commonalities.

Information gathering will ensure the Community Emergency Group gains a better understanding of the community's demographics, sheltering and evacuation information, and areas prone to flooding.

The first step to building your Community Emergency Plan is to hold an open meeting to get buy-in from your community members. There may already be a regular meeting where you can do this, such as a neighborhood watch or a homeowner/community association meeting. During the meeting, determine who is interested in being part of the Community Emergency Planning Group. There also may be active volunteer groups that can help your community not only during a disaster, but also assist you in rallying support and plan development.

For a plan to work efficiently, you will need support and engagement from your community. Raising awareness and encouraging community members to see the value of working together is an important part of building the foundations of a plan.

An effective plan, is diverse and provides opportunities for every member to be involved. Each community member brings different skillsets, knowledge, expertise, and opportunities. For example, some community members may not be able to clear snow, but may be willing to help look after neighboring homes during an emergency or disaster. Community members from different ethnic backgrounds may have language skills to assist with language barriers.

Who Will Take the Lead?

Identify a coordinator to take a lead role in directing the work of this group, as well as, motivating the community. Ensure the community member taking on this role has leadership abilities, a good understanding of your community, and the backing and support of community members.

What Can Your Community Emergency Group Do to Prepare?

In order to make your community more resilient, encourage community members to make plans for how they would react in an emergency or disaster. Recommend community members to begin planning efforts at home, by creating a Household Emergency Plan, *see Appendix A: Household and Pet Emergency Plan Template*.

Identifying Risks

In order to plan for emergencies or disasters, you need to know:

- What risks your community faces?
- How likely they are to occur?
- If they occur, what would their impact be?
- Are any community members specifically at risk?

It is important to focus on the risks which:

- Are most likely to impact your community; and
- You can do something about.

Examples of potential risks you should consider are described below:

Environmental Risks

- Are there any specific areas that are subject to flooding and/or flood regularly?
- Are you frequently isolated by snow events?
- Are there any sites of environmental and/or historic importance which may be impacted?

Infrastructure Risks

- Is there a major transportation facility (such as a train station) in the immediate area?
- Are there any bridges or main roads which are frequently damaged, subject to flooding, and/or closure?
- Are there any large industrial facilities in the area?

Social Risks

- Are there any known vulnerable community members/groups in your area:
 - Who live alone, such as older adults;
 - Who are recovering from a recent operation;
 - Without access to transportation;
 - With access and functional needs, such as limited mobility, sight or hearing impairment, or chronic illness; and
 - Who are reliant on regular medication or medical treatments (i.e. dialysis or chemotherapy) or medical equipment to maintain their health?
- Are there community members/groups with language or cognitive barriers who may have trouble understanding emergency alerts, messaging, and guidance?
- Are there any commercial or nonprofit group residences in your community?
- Are there community members/groups who do not live in the area full-time?



Complete the Local Risk Assessment Template, see **Step 3** in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

First responders cannot always determine the exact needs of a community, or identify community members who may be vulnerable during an emergency or disaster. This degree of assessment requires a significant amount of community input. Once collected, the information could be shared with Anne Arundel County first responders or emergency management personnel before an emergency or disaster occurs. For each risk, you should also think about what preventative steps can be taken to reduce the occurrence or minimize the impact.

Assessing Community Skills and Resources

Once your community is aware of the risks and what their impacts might be, it is important to consider what skills, resources, and equipment your community already has to utilize during an emergency or disaster. You may want to look at your community's existing skills and resources under the following headings and add this information into your plan:



Complete the Local Skills and Resource Assessment Template, see *Step 4* in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

Volunteers

Community members might be expected to help each other in emergencies or disasters; however, as part of your planning, you could speak to community members and groups about potentially volunteering in advance to be available during an emergency or disaster. Take into consideration, their potential skills, tools, or other resources that could be used. Some community members may be trained in first aid or volunteer firefighting, whereas others may be able to assist with certain tasks, such as clearing snow from driveways. Local volunteer-based organizations may be willing to offer training to your community. Contact your local volunteer fire company, Anne Arundel – Annapolis Community Emergency Response Team (AAA CERT), or the American Red Cross for additional information.



You can ask community members about their skills and resources by using a survey, see *Appendix B: Community Survey*.

Tools, Equipment, and Supplies

There may be members in your community who are qualified, capable, and willing to operate tools and machinery in an emergency or disaster. (For example, generators, chainsaws, etc.). It is important to ensure anyone using this kind of equipment is properly trained and the equipment is used safely.

Transportation

Identify which community members may need transportation during an evacuation and coordinate who may be able to assist them with transportation to a family member's home, urgent scheduled medical appointment, or a local shelter.

Insurance

You should encourage community members to review their insurance policies and understand the terms of coverage for emergencies and disasters, such as flood damage, which may need special coverage from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Every resident should

know their insurer and how to contact them after an emergency or disaster. Remember, access to the internet may be interrupted.



For additional insurance information check out:

- Maryland Insurance Administration's Website – <https://insurance.maryland.gov>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency's – National Flood Insurance Program – <https://www.floodsmart.gov>

Emergency Contact List

It is important to keep a record of who is in the Community Emergency Group, as well as others in the community who have offered their help in an emergency or disaster.

Remember to keep personal details secure, and only share them with those who need the information. You may want to record contacts in a telephone tree, which sets out a process through which people have responsibility for calling other contacts.



Complete the Notification Process and Telephone Tree, see **Step 7** in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

Sharing your Plan – Get Feedback From the Community

Once you have drafted your plan, share it with your community to receive their feedback. It is important the plan works for all community members. By sharing the plan, you may see more members interested and gain further insight and support.

The Anne Arundel County Office of Emergency Management and County first responders should be aware of your plan, and may want to offer their input. It is important you share your completed plan with them, so they know who to contact, and what assistance you can provide. You should record who has a copy of your plan and ensure they receive a revised copy whenever it is updated.



Who will receive copies of the Community Emergency Plan? Complete the Plan Distribution List, see **Page i** in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

Response and Recovery

Using your Plan

When an emergency or disaster occurs, you need to know how to activate your plan and efficiently use community members. In any emergency, having a Community Emergency Plan is not a substitute for calling 9-1-1 for life-threatening emergencies.

In large-scale emergencies, first responders may not be able to contact you. Therefore, you should develop a series of triggers you can use as a Community Emergency Group to decide whether or not to take action. For example:

- Have we been able to contact the Anne Arundel County Office of Emergency Management or first responders?
- What can we **safely** do without the help of first responders?

What to Do When You Put Your Plan into Action?

Using your list of skills, community members, and resources, you will need to decide what you can do to **safely augment the work** of first responders and emergency management personnel during the initial response phase and throughout the recovery phase.



How will your Community Emergency Plan be activated? Complete the Activation Triggers Template, see **Step 9** in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

Your First Community Emergency Group Meeting

It may be possible for your group to meet briefly once the plan has been activated. If so, an example of a draft agenda you can use for the first meeting can be found in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*. The draft agenda is only intended to be a guide. You may find your team and community members have already begun helping, but it is important to ensure everyone is safe and working in a coordinated way.

Evacuation

During the initial response to an emergency or disaster, it might be necessary for community members to be evacuated from their homes to a safe place. Reach out to the Anne Arundel County Office of Emergency Management and first responders to see what role your group can play when it comes to coordinating response efforts for evacuations.

You may be able to assist with:

- Identifying those community members who may need additional assistance to move to a safer location; and
- Providing transportation to those in need.



What actions have been agreed upon with the Anne Arundel County Office of Emergency Management and first responders regarding evacuation orders? Complete the Actions Agreed with First Responders Template, see **Step 11** in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

Communications

Your group should discuss how they will cope if telephone or internet communications are disrupted in the area. As an alternative, your group could consider going door-to-door to communicate emergency messaging with community members, if safe to do so. This would also be an opportunity to check on your neighbors. Community leadership should work to ensure all messaging is consistent with the emergency alerts and messaging issued by Anne Arundel County Government and the Office of Emergency Management.



If communications are disrupted, does your community have alternative communications methods? Complete the Alternative Communications Template, see **Step 12** in *Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template*.

Exercising and Updating your Plan

It is important to regularly review and update your Community Emergency Plan to ensure it meets the changing needs and available resources of your community. It is also important to ensure your plan will work during an emergency or disaster.

You may want to practice the plan to verify how well it would work in an emergency or disaster, and what community members are actually willing to help. Practicing your plan will allow you to identify any gaps within the plan. Once you have practiced your plan, you should review and update it annually. At a minimum, you should check the contact information for community members on a semi-annual basis to ensure it is up to date.

When making any changes to the plan, you should record them to ensure everyone knows they are utilizing the latest version and ensure everyone who needs a copy of the plan is sent a copy of the updated version.

Conclusion

You are now ready to take the next steps to help you and your community become more resilient. The attached appendices can be utilized as a step-by-step process to make your community better prepared for any type of emergency or disaster.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Household and Pet Emergency Plan Templates

Appendix B: Community Survey

Appendix C: Community Emergency Plan Template

Emergency Planning Glossary

Access and Functional Needs

Includes individuals who need assistance due to any condition (temporary or permanent) limiting their ability to take action before, during, or after an emergency or disaster.

Community

A social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.

Community Resilience

Communities and its members harnessing resources and expertise to help themselves prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies or disasters, *in a way to complement the work of the first responders and emergency management officials.*

Disaster

An event requiring resources beyond the capability of a community and requiring a multiple agency response.

Emergency

An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human life, welfare, the environment, or security of Anne Arundel County.

Exercise

Practicing response efforts to communities to ensure people know what to do when the time comes.

First Responder

An individual, who responds to emergencies or disasters at the local level, mainly those who have a responsibility under law to do so.

Hazard

An accidental or naturally occurring phenomenon with the potential to cause harm to community members of Anne Arundel County (including loss of life), damage or losses to property, and/or disruption to the environment or to structures (economic, social, political) upon which a community's way of life depends.

Recovery

The coordinated process of rebuilding, restoring, rehabilitating and, perhaps, regenerating communities following an emergency or disaster.

Resilience

This is defined as the ability, at every relevant level to detect, prevent and, if necessary, to handle and recover from disruptive challenges.

Risk

The estimated impact a hazard would have on people, services, facilities, and structures in a community.

Risk Assessment

A structured and auditable process of identifying hazards and threats, assessing their likelihood and impacts, and then combining these to provide an overall assessment of risk, as a basis for further decisions and action.

Threat

Natural, technological, or man-made occurrence, individual, entity, or action that has or indicates the potential to harm life, information, operations, the environment, and/or property.

Vulnerable Populations

Community members who are present or residing within an area needing particular attention during emergencies or disasters. Vulnerable populations may include community members who:

- Are there any known vulnerable community members/groups in your area:
 - Who live alone, such as older adults;
 - Who are recovering from a recent operation;
 - Without access to transportation;
 - With access and functional needs, such as limited mobility, sight or hearing impairment, or chronic illness; and
 - Who are reliant on regular medication or medical treatments (i.e. dialysis or chemotherapy) or medical equipment to maintain their health?

Warning and Public Information

Establishing arrangements to warn the public when an emergency or disaster is likely to occur, or has occurred, and to provide them with information and advice subsequently.

Anne Arundel County Important Telephone Numbers
All Emergencies CALL 9-1-1

Office of Emergency Management	(410) 222-0600
Police (Non-Emergency)	(410) 222-8610
Fire (Non-Emergency)	(410) 222-8200
BGE Power Outages	(877) 778-2222
Animal Care & Control	(410) 222-8900
Community Engagement & Constituent Services	(410) 222-1785
Aging and Disabilities	(410) 222-4257
Health Department	(410) 222-7095
Inspections & Permits	(410) 222-7790
Office of Transportation	(410) 222-0022
Public Schools	(410) 222-5000
Public Schools Student Safety Hotline	(877) 676-9854
Public Works (Dispatch)	(410) 222-8400
Public Works (General)	(410) 222-7500
Public Works (Roads/Snow)	(410) 222-4040
Sheriff's Office	(410) 222-1571
Social Services	(410) 269-4500

County Crisis/Addiction "Warm Line"	(410) 768-5522
Before It's Too Late (Opioid Hotline)	(800) 422-0009
Disaster Distress Helpline	(800) 985-5990
Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline	(800) 422-0009
National Poison Control Center	(800) 222-1222
National Suicide Prevention Hotline	(800) 784-2433
National Veteran's Crisis Line	(800) 273-8255

You should record other important numbers:

School(s)/College(s)		Child Daycare	
Work		Plumber	
Doctor(s)		Electrician	
Insurance Company(s)		Veterinarian	
Nursing Home/Assisted Living		Oxygen Provider	
Hospital Preference			