

Preparedness Basics

Facilitation Guide

**DISASTER STRONG**

**SERIES**

**Disaster Strong: Preparedness Basics Agenda**

* Introduction
* Boulder County Hazard Profile
* Alert and Warning
* Assessing Your Risk
* Making a Plan

**Facilitator Guide Key**

****The **facilitator icon** is a black circle with an image of a person standing in front of a blackboard. This icon indicates facilitator notes or instructions that are not intended to be shared with participants.

****The **activity icon** is a black circle with an image of two gears that are interlocked. This icon indicates an activity that facilitators will need to walk participants through. Each activity has a corresponding area on the unit worksheet. Activities are optional.

[Hyperlinked text](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperlink) – any blue text that is underlined is hyperlinked to a respective website or document, and can be clicked on when using the electronic version of this document.

**Opening Slide**

****During the opening slide you should introduce yourself. This is also a good time to go over any important details regarding the space or participant expectations (i.e. locations of bathrooms and water stations, expectations around use of the space – like if eating is permitted, if participants should use the microphone when they speak, etc.).

This is also a time when, if you choose, you could have participants introduce themselves. If you choose to do so, consider having participants share:

* Name
* Affiliated neighborhood/organization, if applicable
* Question(s) prompted by the facilitator

**Overview Slide**

****For the overview slide, share a bit about why you’re hosting the training. This could be a formal reason, or a more personal reason. Overall the goal of this training is to provide our community with preparedness information to help us become prepared for disasters.

During this workshop we’ll be going over preparedness basics to help our community get ready to get through disasters. We’ll talk about our Boulder County hazard profile and what hazards pose the biggest risks, alert and warning systems, how to assess risk and focus your preparedness efforts, and how to create a plan.

Some of the content may bring up emotions from past experiences – while it’s not intended to overwhelm or stir up other difficult emotions, if you do find yourself needing to step away or disengage please do so and ensure you’re taking care of yourself.

**Section 1: Boulder County Hazard Profile**

The Boulder County Hazard Profile helps us to understand the risks that exist in our community.

**Introduction of Terminology**

As we talk about the history of disasters it’s important to first understand some terminology so we all have a similar understanding of what we’re talking about.

FEMA defines a **disaster** as an occurrence of a natural catastrophe, technological accident, or human-caused event that has resulted in severe property damage, deaths, and/or multiple injuries. Typically, disasters exceed the response capability of the local jurisdiction and requires state, and potentially federal, involvement. The 2013 Floods and the Marshall Fire would be examples of disasters that have occurred in our community.

Conversely, **emergencies** are defined by FEMA as an occasion or instance that warrants action to save lives, protect property, public health, and safety. Emergencies occur every day in the county. Examples would be car accidents, house fires, medical emergencies and more. Emergencies do not exceed the capacity of the resources available within the county.

**Activity #1:** What disasters have you experienced in Boulder County, or what types do you think could occur? This could be based on your personal experience, or your understanding of what disasters we are vulnerable to.

* + - Allow a few participants to share their answers.
		- Using the facilitator handout, reveal other disasters that have occurred but were not listed by the class: i.e. dam break, mine explosion, bombing.

**History of Disasters in Boulder County**

You may be wondering, why talk about disaster history if we’re trying to prepare for the future? In this section we’ll explore history to gain an understanding of where we’ve been as a county, and gain an understanding of the scope and historical frequency of various types of disasters that have occurred in this area.

Prior to your facilitation, review the History of Disasters in Boulder County list. Facilitators should select a few disasters to highlight from the list, or provide an overview of how many disasters are recorded and share different types that may resonate with their group.

**Top 5 Risks**

The following are the top 5 risks that exist in our county. Wildfire is by far our most significant risk, followed by communicable disease (disease which spreads between humans) or zoonotic outbreak (disease which spreads between animals), flood, winter storm, and extreme temperatures (both hot and cold). Depending on your location in the county you may find that you have other risks that impact you more significantly than these. For a full look at hazards that exist in Boulder County you can visit [www.boulderodm.gov](http://www.boulderodm.gov) and click on the “Know Your Risks” button on the preparedness page. By understanding the risks in your area you can have a better understanding of what types of things may occur, and be more prepared!

**Section 2: Emergency Alerts**

The number one take away as we talk about the beginning phases of preparedness is in relation to emergency alerts. Emergency alerts are the first step to getting yourself prepared as they help you gain situational awareness about the environment around you at any given time. In this section we’ll go over the two main types of opt-in alert systems so that you can choose methods that will be most helpful to you.

**Activity #2:** How are you typically notified or made aware of an emergency or disaster?

* + - Allow a few participants to share their answers.

**Everbridge Opt-In Alerts**

* Our county uses an opt-in notification system called Everbridge.
* Reaches anyone with a phone or e-mail access.
* Notifications are sent to cell phones, landlines, and e-mail addresses that participants enter in when they register. This system allows our Communications Center (dispatch) to send relevant alerts to specifically targeted geographical areas. Everbridge is an opt-in system for cell and e-mail notifications (landline phones are automatically added and receive alerts) so does require registration in order to receive alerts.
* You will only receive alerts if one of your addresses in the system is in the area of concern.

**ReachWell App**

* Used to provide community members with alert information in over 100 languages.
* Can also be used to receive all alerts that go out in Boulder County (if you want to receive alerts outside of the 5 address areas that you can list in Everbridge)
* Download the app by searching “ReachWell” in your device’s app store – once in the app, search BOCO Alert and add it to your dashboard.
* Doesn’t require you to create an account or share personal information.

**Remember…**

When it comes to alerts, remember that you are always your first notification system. Trust your intuition – if you see, hear, smell, or sense something, make decisions that will keep you safe!

If you’d like a full list of all alert types, visit [www.boulderodm.gov](http://www.boulderodm.gov) and visit the preparedness page and click on [“Understanding Emergency Alerting Systems”](https://www.boulderoem.com/preparedness/) (document is in English, Spanish, and is screen-reader compatible).

**Initiating an Alert**

Now that we’ve talked about our two main types of alerts, let’s go over how an alert is born. Alerts are sent out by starting with incident command, who then share information with dispatch, who then get it to the public through the alert systems.

**Incident Command**

When an alert goes out, the process always begins in the field. First responders arrive on scene, assess the situation, then contact the 911 Dispatch Center to send the alert.

An alert is initiated by first responders who are at the scene of the incident. As they arrive law or fire personnel work together to establish leadership, which is called Incident Command. Incident Command can consist of one or multiple people who size up the incident and potential impact, manage personnel on scene, and make critical decisions. When Incident Command has determined that a threat exists to the broader community they will determine the area of anticipated impact, then contact their 911 Dispatch Center to relay information and direct dispatchers to send out an emergency alert to a specific alerting area.

**Dispatch**

Once dispatchers have information on the area the alert needs to go to from first responders, they enter information into their alerting systems and send the alert.

**You**

Once they complete that step, you receive the alert!

**Notification Terminology**

When notifications are sent out you’ll receive one of three types of guidance. This language is important to understand to be able to take appropriate action after receiving a notification.

* **Advisories** – information about an emergency situation that is likely to impact communities; used to raise awareness of a possible situation.
	+ **I**f we use making dinner as an analogy, the advisory phase is the “at the grocery store” phase of making dinner. Nothing is happening yet, but we’re putting the concept that dinner is coming on the radar because we’re gathering ingredients.
* **Warnings** – used to prepare community members to take action.
	+ Those who may need more time to mobilize due to access and functional needs should take action during this phase.
	+ At this phase of our dinner analogy we’re in the kitchen starting to prep things. We’ve got all the ingredients and conditions for a situation to occur, but nothing has happened just yet.
* **Orders** – take immediate action due to an imminent life threat.
	+ At this phase of our dinner analogy dinner is on the table and ready to eat (so it’s time to take action!).

**Notification Actions**

When you receive a notification it may contain some of the following language to give you direction on what type of action to take. The following are the common action steps you’ll see given:

* **Climb to higher ground** – a directive to move to a location nearby that is higher than your current position. This may be as simple as scurrying up a hillside in the immediate vicinity or going to second story of a building, and can save your life in flooding emergencies.
* **Evacuation** – a directive to leave the area immediately.
* **Shelter-in-place** – a directive to remain indoors until the situation is resolved.
* **Missing/endangered person(s)** – information about a missing or endangered person that is shared to increase community awareness.
* **All clear** – a follow-up to previous messages issued after public safety officials determine the hazard has been mitigated and no longer presents a threat to the community.

**Assessing Your Risk**

Preparedness can be overwhelming at times – but one way to make it more manageable is to assess your risk and focus in on your biggest vulnerabilities or preparedness gaps and how you might fill them. When we think about how to prepare we want to think about how we can grow our own capability to maintain our wellbeing – which can be personal preparedness planning or growing our support systems so that we have others to lean on during tough times.

**Lifelines**

Lifelines are critical to maintaining our wellbeing as individuals, and as a community. The ability to access lifelines can have a significant effect on the severity and scale of a disaster, and the type of response and support needed. For a situation to be fully stabilized, re-establishment of lifelines needs to be achieved. Lifelines apply to our larger community, but we can also assess how well we can maintain our own personal lifelines as a way to start working on preparedness. Focusing on lifelines is helpful as well as you create your preparedness plan – that way, rather than having a different plan for different types of disasters you have a well rounded plan for how you’ll maintain the critical supports that you’ll need in any disaster situation.

Lifelines are:

1. **Safety and security** – law enforcement, security measures, fire service, search and rescue, government service, and community safety
2. **Food, water, and shelter** – food, water, shelter, and agriculture
3. **Health and medical** – medical care, public health, patient movement, medical supply chain, fatality management
4. **Energy** – power grid, fuel, battery power, or other energy sources
5. **Communications** – infrastructure, responder communications, alert and warning messages, finance, 911 and dispatch centers
6. **Transportation** – highway and roadway motor vehicle access, mass transit, railways, aviation, and water travel
7. **Hazardous material** – facilities, hazmat, pollutants, and contaminants

**Activity: Current Preparedness**

**Have participants think through the following questions:**

* What are some things that you are already doing to be prepared?
* What lifelines are you less certain that you have a plan for?
* What are some of your vulnerabilities?

**Making a Plan**

Now that we’ve talked through personal risk assessment it’s time to lay out the base of a plan.

**Planning Components**

A good preparedness plan takes the components covered in our last unit into account and provides a game plan for how to manage your risk levels and gaps in your personal capabilities. Your plan to get notified (communication), get out (evacuation or shelter-in-place), and get your grab list (making sure you have a list built, and know how you will gather these items) will help you respond better during a disaster.

In addition to addressing these components, your plan needs to be actionable and sustainable. An **actionable** plan is one that is realistic that you are able to carry out with the skills and resources that you have access to. A good plan is also **sustainable**, meaning that you can enact it and carry it out over time, or repeat it as necessary. As you create your plan, think of ways you might be able to practice it ahead of time so that when the stress of a disaster hits you’ve got some muscle memory built up.

Having your own plan for protection of yourself and your property is not only empowering, but also helps support our community as a whole. A high level of self-sufficiency from each of us helps first responders allocate efforts to responding to the disaster, and supporting those who may be in true emergency situations that they cannot manage on their own.

**Creating Your Personal Plan**

There are three key areas we’ll focus in on that will help you in creating an actionable and sustainable personal plan. These areas are communication, evacuation or shelter-in-place, and creating a grab list.

**Communication**

Getting notified with emergency alerts was our first section of this workshop for a reason – it is the first key in making sure you are able to take action. Communication planning efforts that occur prior to a disaster (such as getting signed up for notifications, ensuring loved ones know your plan, etc.) are important, as is your communication to loved ones once you are out of harm’s way.

To stay informed, sign-up for emergency notifications and find ways to be plugged into other sources of information (neighbors, group chats, social media, traditional media, BoulderODM.gov, etc.).

During a disaster it may be difficult to communicate with family and friends through traditional methods – cell towers may be overloaded or damaged, and if you don’t have a phone charger or power source available (both of which are great to consider in building your grab list, which we’ll discuss in just a bit) you may be unreachable for several hours. To combat communication concerns, develop a communication plan with your support system by considering the following:

* Think about who will be important to alert about the onset of a disaster – any neighbors, friends, or relatives who may have access and functional needs or require additional support.
* Think about who you want to be sure to check in with to ensure they’re out, or those that you’ll want to inform that you are safe.
* Consider “checking in” on social media platforms, such as Facebook, to notify loved ones that you are safe.
* Establish an out-of-town emergency contact. They may be easier to reach during a disaster.
* Keep a hard copy of important phone numbers and addresses.
* Consider texting instead of calling when phone lines are busy.
* Use e-mail to make contact if you don’t have the ability to use a phone in traditional ways.

**Activity: Communication Planning**

If you haven’t done so already, take a moment to sign-up for emergency notifications at [www.boulderodm.gov](http://www.boulderodm.gov) or download the ReachWell app.

Once you’ve completed your registration, outline your communication plan answering the following questions:

1. What are the methods you will utilize to get notified?
2. How will you communicate with loved ones? How will you make them aware of your communication plans in advance?
3. What are important phone numbers you need to have hard copies of?
4. How will you power your communication devices?
5. Who could you and family/friends use as your out-of-town emergency contact to touch in with?

**Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place**

The next critical component of a preparedness plan that we’re going to focus on is evacuations. This is the “get out” portion of your plan (although depending on the nature of the disaster, you may need to shelter-in-place or climb to higher ground instead of evacuate – as a reminder, the alert you receive will share information about what action to take).

As you plan for evacuation, you’ll need to consider how you’ll get to safety. Walking? Biking? Vehicle? Neighbors? Public transit? Think about the mode of transportation that you will use, and what limitations or backup plans you may need. Depending on the mode you’ll use to evacuate it may be good to have a backup plan or two so that you can easily pivot your plan if there are hurdles in using your primary method. For example, if you usually use public transit, but we move from the warning to order phase of notification quickly, public transportation may stop running as usual. This is where it will be critical to have a backup option (and underscores the importance of leaving earlier if you have components of your plan that you have more limited control over).

Think about garages as you think about your transportation methods as well. If you keep a vehicle or other transportation device in your garage and there is a risk of power loss consider opening your garage door at the warning phase, or know how to open it in the event of a loss of power. If you do lose power, your garage door will have a red pull cord that will allow you to manually open the door (but remember, if you need to use that, you’ll also need to ensure you have the ability to open the door).

In thinking about your plan for evacuation, it’s also important to think about multiple routes out of your neighborhood or other locations you frequent. This will help you if your usual route is impacted by the disaster. Consider driving around your area and taking different routes to and from your most visited locations to help build muscle memory – and if you know that you’re in a one-way-in, one-way-out type of location, consider leaving prior to the order phase.

As we think through evacuations, here are a few other points to keep in mind or consider:

* Once an order is given, and depending on the severity of the disaster you should keep your safety as a top priority – meaning you may need to evacuate by any means necessary. If you’re facing an imminent life safety risk, that means if you have to cut fencing, drive across a lawn, hop a curb, etc. – you should do it. You should follow barricades and law enforcement directions, but in a situation that is dire, driving across an area that is not typically a roadway is going to be okay in the long run.
* If you do not have a vehicle, your plan may look a little different, and depend on social supports or earlier action. For example, you may coordinate with a few neighbors for ride possibilities (and plan those ahead of time, and how best to get ahold of one another), or if you get a warning rather than order you may choose to hop on public transportation and get out ahead of time just to be safe, and stay with friends, family, or a public location (places like libraries or other free public areas while you wait for a shelter if you don’t have someone specific to stay with).

**Activity: Evacuation Planning**

Start making your evacuation plans by answering the following questions:

1. What are two or more routes that you could take out of your neighborhood in the event of road closures?
2. Are there loved ones you need to create a meet-up spot for? Where will that spot be?
3. What are two modes of transportation you could take as you evacuate? (have a primary mode, and at least one backup option)
4. What supplies, if any, do you want to have on-hand in your vehicle that may be useful during an evacuation?
5. If you have a garage, do you know how to use the pull tab/have the physical ability to lift the door to get out if you lose power? If not, what plan might you need to have?

**Activity: Sheltering-In-Place Planning**

As we think about sheltering due to severe weather, hazmat situations, or other public safety hazards, think about the following while you develop your plan:

1. How will you maintain your lifelines while staying in place? Do you have food, water, ways to stay warm, etc?
2. What are your means of communication while in a shelter-in-place environment?

**Grab List**

The final key component of your preparedness plan that we’ll cover is the creation of a grab list. For years the advice many of us have heard in relation to disaster preparedness is “build a kit”. While a kit can be very helpful, particularly in certain contexts (like having specific items at the ready in your vehicle, in a box or bag you can easily grab as you either evacuate or shelter, etc.), it is important that you keep items that may expire (like food, water, medications, devices powered by batteries, etc.) swapped out. If you prefer to commit to maintaining a kit that is a wonderful resource, however we recommend starting with a grab list of items to take with you during an evacuation.

A grab list is a list of items that you want to take with you in the event of an evacuation, and it is recommended that you keep the list of these items (and their location) in an easy to grab spot so that you can more easily gather important items, toss them in a bag, and get out the door and on your way to safety. A grab list can be scalable, which can be helpful given that you may have more or less time to evacuate depending on the nature of the disaster.

Not sure what you need to take with you in the time of an emergency or disaster? Start by focusing on **the 7 P’s** as you build your grab list:

* + 1. **P**eople
		2. **P**ets, including pet food
		3. **P**apers or important documents
		4. **P**rescriptions, including eyeglasses
		5. **P**ictures or other irreplaceable memorabilia like baby blankets
		6. **P**ersonal Computers and cell phones
		7. **P**lastic, including credit/debit cards and cash

Remember, there are no rights or wrongs when it comes to what to take or how to plan. The goal is to look at your own needs and make a plan that fits for those.

* For example, if you have more than one vehicle, you may ask, do I take both, or one? There’s no correct answer – instead you want to think through – if you’re evacuating, are you comfortable being away from the loved one who may be driving that vehicle? Do you both have equal driving skills? Is there fuel in both vehicles that will get you far enough out of harms way? There’s no correct answer, just things to consider as you create your plan.

**Activity: Grab List Planning**

Are there items that you could think of right now that you’d want to take with you? What are they?

What are some key items or actions you would want to be prepared with that would help maintain your lifelines?

* + - Ex. Food and water, funds (cash and cards), critical medical supplies or medications, methods to keep warm (i.e. if power is lost during a severe winter storm, how could you keep warm? What if you were in your vehicle?), etc.

Create your grab list of items, and write down their locations if you choose.

Have participants write their answers in on their worksheet and share out as time allows.

When putting your list together, think of where you’ll store your list, and if you want to keep any items in a particular spot. For example, you may want to have a box where you put originals or digital copies of important photos or documents, keepsakes, etc. In reality, if push comes to shove and the time you have to evacuate is limited you should focus on taking the irreplaceable things with you – if you can buy it, it’s replaceable, and your safety is more important than any item.

**Additional Considerations**

When planning, it is important to consider your accessibility, dietary, medical, religious, and cultural needs. Consider what special resources may be needed, time that would need to be allotted to accomplish a task, etc. Your preparedness not only helps you, but our responders and your neighbors and friends in the community.

**Access and Functional Needs**

Do you or does someone in your life need to plan for circumstances that limit or delay the ability to take action during a disaster? This is a critical component to take into account as you create your plan, as mobility, language skills, access to transportation, and other access and functional needs may create barriers that need to be addressed.

For example, if you may take longer to be able to mobilize, your plan may consist of you starting to evacuate at a warning phase rather than when an order is issued so that you have more time to get out safely at a pace that is reasonable for you.

**Time and Place**

Think about how your plan may need to be adjusted, or created for a different location, day of the week, or time of day. For example, if you have a child, what would your plan look like on a weekday vs. a weekend? If you have only one means of transportation but that is in use by another household member on certain days of the week, how would your evacuation plan need to change?

**Planning for Pets**

Pets can be sensitive to disaster environments and experience stress just as we do. When planning for your pets, be sure to consider the following:

* Have a safe way to transport them – a carrier, harness, etc. and know where you can go in the event of an evacuation (many hotels and public shelters do not allow pets inside).
	+ - Have a buddy system of a friend, neighbor, or relative who can care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so.
		- Ensure they are microchipped and have tags on as a preparation step.
		- Have food and any toys or items that may comfort them at the ready in your go-bag or grab list.
		- For large animals, be sure to have a means of evacuation transportation, and start as early as possible.
		- For trailering horses, cattle, etc. practice ahead of time is key – that way when stressors are heightened this is not the first time you are having them do an action that may be quite scary for them.

**Additional Planning and Community Resources**

The Boulder ODM website preparedness page has information on planning, and access to all the content we’ve covered in this series if you’d like to revisit. Our hope is that you walk away today with a starting point for your plan, however remember that it’s okay and normal for plans to continue to evolve as you learn through experience.

Some other helpful community resources include:

* Boulder ODM website – preparedness page.
	+ Use to access worksheets, information, and other resources as you create your preparedness plan.
* Wildfire Partners
	+ You can sign-up for assessments and learn more about mitigation on their website.
* Local fire departments
	+ You can reach out to your local fire department for information, and home assessments for fire mitigation.
* Fire Adapted Colorado
	+ Website with tons of resources on all types of fire related preparedness.
* Disaster Strong Series events
	+ If you’re looking for additional training consider joining for any of our upcoming workshops or events. You can find out more at [www.boulderodm.gov](http://www.boulderodm.gov).

**Thank You**

****Wrap up with any closing remarks you’d like to share with your participants, and information on your next session (if you are doing trainings over multiple dates), or to the Boulder ODM preparedness page of the website for future opportunities.

**Workshop Feedback**

Thank you for taking the time to spend learning more about preparedness. If you would, please fill out this brief survey by scanning the QR code – your feedback means a lot, and helps us continue to add or adjust content to best serve our community!

**Workshop Feedback**

Ask all participants to provide their feedback by using the QR code or [this link](https://forms.office.com/g/FBCDdeDrhc). Let them know that this provides the opportunity for anonymous feedback, and we use the feedback to clarify our current content or add new content that would benefit participants.

**Annex 1: QR Code Use Instructions**

* There are QR codes featured throughout the presentation slides for each unit that allow participants to easily access websites and forms by using a smart phone.
* Individuals can access a QR code by using a smartphone and following these steps:
	+ Open “camera” function as if they were going to take a picture
	+ Point their phone camera at the QR code (as if they were going to take a picture of it)
	+ Do not click the button to take a photo of the QR code – instead just leave it in focus on the camera, and in a few moments a link will pop up on your screen.
	+ Click the link that pops up, and it will direct you to the website.

**Annex 2: Glossary**

**Advisory:** a type of notification messageissued to raise awareness of a possible situation; used to share information about a situation that is likely to impact communities.

**Climb to higher ground:** a type of alert directive used to inform people to move to a location nearby that is higher than your current position. This could include moving up a hillside or to the second floor of a building.

**Disaster:** an occurrence of a natural catastrophe, technological accident, or human-caused event that has resulted in severe property damage, deaths, and/or multiple injuries. Typically, disasters exceed the response capability of the local jurisdiction and requires state, and potentially federal, involvement.

**Emergency:** an occasion or instance that warrants action to save lives, protect property, public health, and safety.

**Evacuation:** a type of alert directive used to inform people to leave the area immediately.

**Missing/Endangered Person:** a type of alert directive used to share information about a missing or endangered person that is shared to increase community awareness.

**Mitigation:** is the process of preventing or reducing the cause, impact, and consequences of a disaster.

**Order:** a type of notification message issued to give a directive to take action immediately due to an imminent life threat.

**Preparedness:** the planning, training, and educational activities engaged in to ready oneself or community for disasters that cannot be mitigated.

**Recovery:** a period that involves restoration efforts occurring concurrently with regular operations to provide stability after a disaster.

**Response:** actions taken in the immediate aftermath of a disaster or emergency.

**Shelter-in-Place:** a type of alert directive used to inform people to remain indoors until the situation is resolved and an “all clear” message is sent through the alert system.

**Warning:** a type of notification message used to prepare people to take action; for those who may need additional time to mobilize they should consider evacuating/sheltering-in-place/climbing to higher ground when a warning is sent.

**Notes:**