

# **HOW TO COPE WITH EMERGENCIES**

**Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies  
Guide for Setting up COPE Neighborhood Teams  
Telephone: (707) 543-3711**

## **About COPE**

### **Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies (COPE)**

was started by residents of the Santa Rosa community of Oakmont, in cooperation with the Santa Rosa Fire Department and American Red Cross. The Leaders of the Oakmont COPE Program, Sue Hattendorf and Al Thomas have over 2/3 of their 2,800 households participating in their program. It is the belief of the City of Santa Rosa that we can, and need to, repeat this success. With the help of spirited citizen volunteers working in the community to train and educate their neighbors, we can all COPE a little better with disasters that may disrupt our lives such as earthquake, fire, flood, landslide, terrorism, public health, or other community emergency. The mission of COPE is to help residents, families, and neighborhoods become and remain better prepared to respond to and recover from emergency situations. This includes developing

individual response plans, maintaining individual emergency supply kits, and outreaching to neighborhoods in the community.

## **COPE Terms**

- **Resident:** A person or party that lives in a dwelling, home, apartment, mobile home, or other facility. Lives in one of the Santa Rosa Fire Districts.

- **Neighborhood Leader:** Collects information from households, trains residents, maintains data base, schedules regular meetings, and is first on scene after an emergency and remains there until relieved of duty. Takes role call, completes summary report, and gives assignments. Gives summary report to COPE Community Coordinator or District Zone Leader. Retains COPE photo ID to show Fire Responders, if requested.

- **Neighborhood Co-Leader:** Supports leader. If leader is not on scene, acts as leader and remains until relieved of duty.

Co-Leader supports and helps leader with collecting information, maintaining records, and may be assigned to take summary report to next level of organization. Keeps COPE photo ID to show to First Responders, if requested.

- **Community Coordinator/Co-Coordinator:** Takes responsibility for a large group of neighborhoods, usually within a homeowner's association or geographic area. Recruits and trains COPE Neighborhood Leaders within their community. Will also collect damage assessment information and report it up to their designated District Zone Leader for their COPE Fire District after an emergency.

- **COPE District Zone Leader/Co-Leader** – Takes primary responsibility for recruiting and training COPE Community and Neighborhood Leaders in their COPE Fire District Zone and organizing damage assessment reporting for several neighborhoods in their area. COPE Zone Leaders will work with many Neighborhood Leaders and Community Coordinators to develop methods to communicate damage

assessment information from neighborhoods up to the COPE District Coordinator at the Santa Rosa Fire District building.

- **District Coordinator/Co-Coordinator:** Covers a complete fire district. Will appoint and train COPE District Zone Leaders. Holds regular meetings for the COPE District Zone Leaders and supports them at their meetings with Community and Neighborhood Leaders. During a major event reports to the District Fire Station and/or COPE Center to collect Damage Assessment information from Zone Leaders and it to the Emergency Operations Center using COPE Communicators (usually ham radio operators located at the fire station and/or COPE Center).

## **Developing Your Own COPE Neighborhood Team**

The following **seven steps** are guidelines to assist COPE Leaders in developing and maintaining their COPE Neighborhood Teams:

1. **Define the Scope Of Your Neighborhood.** Include ten to twenty homes. If a homeowners association, segment into

manageable groups. Combine homes in maintained and non-maintained areas, if appropriate.

**2. Build Your Neighborhood Leadership Team.** Enlist one Leader and recruit two to three people as Co-Leaders. They should be committed to the COPE program and capable of responding after an emergency to rapidly changing situations.

**3. Take a Census of the Residents In Your Neighborhood.** Using the enclosed Census Form, document resident names, contact information, special skills, special needs, physical limitations, health problems, and equipment that could be useful such as generators and chainsaws. Be prepared to help neighbors who need assistance.

**4. Record Information about Each Home.** Record location of gas, water, and electric shutoffs. Understand manual operation of garage door. Note specific fire dangers, such as wooden shingle roofs and location of flammable vegetation. Note availability of special tools for use in emergencies.

**5. Identify Meeting Site and Escape Routes.** Choose a central meeting site to congregate when emergency occurs. Define alternative escape routes for evacuation based on specific situations. Designate a meeting site near home and an alternative safe site outside the neighborhood if the neighborhood is inaccessible or evacuated.

**6. Schedule and Conduct a Meeting of Residents.** Introduce COPE Neighborhood Team Leader and Co-Leaders. Review results of COPE Team Census Form. Discuss central meeting site and escape routes, team actions in the event of an emergency, and communications and transportation to medical control and evaluation centers. Distribute copies from this guide to each residence.

**7. Maintain Your Plans and Kits with Ongoing Effort.** Every time you change your clocks (every six months), conduct a COPE Neighborhood Team meeting and review and update all COPE material. Update COPE Team Census Form for new residents in your neighborhood or changes to needs and

capabilities of residents. Review planned meeting site and escape routes. Inform residents of any changes.

## **Conducting COPE Neighborhood Team Meetings**

At the COPE Neighborhood Team meeting the COPE Team Leader will share all information in this guide, answer residents' questions, and determine whether the COPE Neighborhood Team should have a COPE Coordinator accompany the team on a walk-around of the neighborhood. The COPE Neighborhood Team Leader will also provide copies of the Emergency Preparedness Kit, Preparing Yourself At Home, Earthquake Awareness, Census Form, Team Roster, Neighborhood Map, and Away-From-Home Notice sheets for each household. **Stress the following to the COPE Neighborhood**

### **Team:**

1. Know the two best evacuation routes from each room, your home, and the neighborhood.

2. Know where your designated COPE Neighborhood Team meeting site is in your neighborhood and outside the neighborhood.
3. Know which Fire Station or COPE Center is closest to your location to obtain assistance and to provide updates on your neighborhood.
4. Know where your utility shutoffs (gas, electricity and water) are located and how to turn them off. Caution residents to NOT turn off gas except in a real emergency when you smell natural gas or hear a gas leak. If it is turned off, the gas company will need to come out to turn the gas back on.
5. Know how to open your garage door if power is off. If you are unable to raise the door manually, please tell your COPE Neighborhood Team Leader so that assistance can be provided.
6. When an emergency occurs, go to the COPE Neighborhood Team meeting site for roll call. If residents are not present, a team of at least two COPE members will go check on them. Remember that your own safety comes first; never jeopardize your own safety.

7. During or after a major emergency, if safe, get cars out of the garage and park them on the street in the direction that has been determined the best evacuation route.
8. Have an emergency response plan and emergency preparedness kit.
9. Your COPE Team Leader will collect and summarize information from your neighborhood to relay to the COPE Fire District Zone Coordinator, who alerts the COPE District Coordinator at the nearest Fire Station or COPE Center.
10. Review and update your census, contact information, individual plans, emergency supply kit, smoke detector, and battery-operated devices each spring and fall when you change your clocks.

## **Preparing Yourself At Home**

- **Safety Survey Your Home.** Check each room with “earthquake eyes.” Sit in each room and ask yourself what would injure you if a major earthquake hit at that moment. Fix any possible hazards.

- **Kitchen.** An unprepared kitchen can be the most hazardous room in the house. Shattered glass, spilled chemicals, gas-fed fires, and falling objects are potential hazards.
- **Bedroom.** Are there any objects that could fall and injure you in bed or block your escape route? Place shoes, flashlight, extra set of car keys, and phone numbers of contacts in a plastic bag under your bed.
- **Bathroom.** Broken glass is the greatest potential hazard. Wear heavy shoes when entering the bathroom after earthquake.
- **Living Areas.** Attach tall objects, such as bookshelves and dressers, to wall studs. Place heavy objects on floor or lower shelves. Store most-valuable breakable objects on lower shelves; consider earthquake wax to secure objects. Consider childproof locks on cabinets. Check smoke detectors every time you change your clocks.
- **Garage and Laundry Room.** Water heater should be strapped with lag bolts to studs in wall; one strap 1/3 distance from top and another 1/3 from bottom. Gas water heater and gas stove in kitchen should use flexible gas lines that will

move in an earthquake. Place heavy objects on lower garage shelving, if around car. Store flammable material in well-marked, unbreakable containers. Properly dispose of any hazardous material no longer needed. Know how to open electric garage door if power is off.

- **Automobile.** Always keep gas tank 1/4 to 1/2 full. Place emergency supplies in trunk of car. When you get new eye glasses, place old pair in glove compartment. Keep cell phone charger in car.

- **Exterior.** Keep lawns trimmed, leaves raked, and roof and rain gutters free of debris. Remove any dead wood, debris, and low tree branches within 5 yards of houses. Thin out shrubs and trees within 10 yards. If possible, store flammable materials in metal containers at least 10 yards away from house and wood fences. Get rid of any flammable material that isn't needed. Store firewood 10 yards from house. Landscape property with fire resistant plants and vegetation.

## **COPE Emergency Preparedness Kit**

The following is a suggested list of supplies to be kept in a 72-hour Emergency Preparedness Kit in a metal or plastic garbage can or other sturdy container that is easily transportable. It can be stored in a garage, shed, or other out-of-the-way location.

- **Water.** Have at least one gallon per person per day and replace every six months. Water can also be obtained from your water heater: be sure to double strap the water heater to keep it secure. Bleach and an eye dropper should be included: 8 drops of bleach per gallon of clear water or 16 drops for cloudy water will purify into drinking water; let stand 30 minutes before drinking.

- **Food.** Pack non-perishable, high-protein items, including energy bars, ready-to-eat soup, peanut butter, canned foods, dried fruits, nuts, crackers, etc. Include a manual can opener, eating utensils, bowls, plates, and cups.

- **First Aid Kit.** Pack a reference guide. Include the following items if not already in your first aid kit: band-aids, gauze pads, adhesive tape, adhesive and elastic bandages, antibiotic cream, white sheet or cloth strips for bandages and splints,

dust mask, latex gloves, sterile wipes or solution, Epsom salts, peroxide, pain reliever, tweezers, scissors, safety pins, alcohol wipes or ethyl alcohol, thermometer. Maintain a 14-day supply of prescription and non-prescription medication and refresh it periodically.

- **Flashlight.** Include extra dated batteries; test and replace them annually. A better option is a hand-crank light.

- **Battery-Operated Radio.** Include extra dated batteries to be replaced annually. A better option is a hand-crank radio.

- **Tools and Equipment.** Include wrench to shut off gas when necessary, screw driver, hammer, pliers, knife, scissors, duct tape, waterproof matches, candles, pen and paper, plastic sheeting, garbage bags, and Ziploc bags.

- **Clothing.** Provide a change of clothes for everyone, including sturdy shoes, warm jacket, hat, gloves, and a rain poncho.

- **Blankets.** Include warm blankets or sleeping bag.

- **Important Documents.** Retain copies of important papers, such as identification cards, insurance policies, birth certificates, passports, or other legal and financial information.

Include photographs of household members as well as medications and health information.

- **Contact Information.** Carry a current list of family phone number and e-mail addresses, including someone out of the area who may be easier to contact if local phone lines are out of service.
- **Sanitary Supplies.** Include toilet paper, towelettes, feminine supplies, soap, toothpaste and brush, trash bags, etc.
- **Money.** Have at least \$100 per person including coins and bills stored in your emergency kit. ATM machines will not work with power outages in the area.
- **Pet Supplies.** Include food, water, leash, litter box or plastic bags, tags, any medications, and vaccination information.
- **Map.** Mark an evacuation route from your local area plus an alternative route.
- **Eyeglasses.** Keep your extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lenses and solution in kit. Include a pair of sunglasses.
- **Fire Extinguisher.** Check gauge for full charge and know how to use it.
- **Keys.** Keep an extra set in your kit.

- **Whistle.** Use to notify rescuers if you are trapped under debris.

Include any necessary items for infants, seniors, or people with disabilities in your kit.

Create and maintain a smaller version of the kit inside your vehicle and at work in a backpack or duffel bag in case you become stranded, are away from home, or need to evacuate.

Keep gas tank at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  full at all times.

For more information on kits, emergency water, and other preparedness suggestions visit the COPE web page at:

[cope.srcity.org](http://cope.srcity.org)

## **Earthquake Preparedness**

### **Before An Earthquake:**

- Know your designated COPE neighborhood meeting site and the location of your local Fire District Station.
- Know critical needs of yourself, your family, and your neighbors.
- Be aware of any unique hazards near your home such as power lines, trees, or hills.

- Know the best escape route from each room, your home, and the neighborhood. Also have an alternate route from each.
- Know where the gas, electric, and water shutoffs are located and how to use them. Attach gas shutoff wrench to gas meter.
- Keep shoes, flashlight, and critical information (medical information, photo ID, keys, and contact telephone numbers, including an out-of-state contact for family members to contact and relay messages) under bed in plastic bag.
- Develop a plan and have an emergency kit.

## **During An Earthquake – Remain Calm:**

If Inside:

- Seek immediate shelter.
- **Drop, Cover, and Hold** at least 15 feet from any window or try to get under something sturdy that will protect you from falling glass and debris such as a sturdy table or desk. Hold on to it.
- In a hallway, sit down against a wall and cover your head.

- Never run outside during the earthquake. Debris and glass can fall off buildings and cause injuries

If Outside:

- Move away from buildings to an open area.
- Watch for downed power lines or light poles.

### **After An Earthquake**

- Check to see phones were not shaken off hooks. Only use phones for emergency calls.
- **Check** the situation, **Call** for backup if necessary, and **Care** for victims without jeopardizing your safety.
- Put out small fires and clean up spills. If fire is larger than a trash can, leave room, and close door.
- If safe, take a walk around your home and carefully look for damage.
- Go to your prearranged COPE neighborhood meeting site to report what you have seen.
- Get car out of garage and load it with supplies to prepare for evacuation, if necessary.

- Call your out-of-state contact to check on safety of family members and relay messages.
- Turn radio to KZST 100.1 FM or KSRO 1350 AM.