

Your Neighbors as Life Lines

The Map Your Neighborhood program is a 90-minute survival course that could save your neighbors' lives.

By Bill Hopkins
Community Contributor

The Map Your Neighborhood – MYN, pronounced “mine” – program is designed to teach neighbors how to make the most of those precious “golden hour” minutes immediately following a disaster.

Officially, it's a 90-minute program, but when neighbors get together, the training can last up to two to three hours.

MYN was conceived and developed by LuAn K. Johnson of Washington state's Emergency Management Department,

who draw upon her experience in creating the Sunnyvale Neighborhoods Actively Prepare (SNAP) program when she worked in the Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety.

For the MYN program, 10-25 families are considered a neighborhood, whether they be single-family homes, condos, townhomes, or apartments, and whether occupants are renters or owners. In an emergency, we're conditioned to call 9-1-1 for help, but in a disaster, where emergency responders are unable to respond quickly, we'll be on our own. What if your well-being or survival immediately following a disaster depends not only on what you know, but on what your neighbors know? Wouldn't you want them trained as well?

In MYN, residents develop a Neighborhood Skills and Equipment Inventory. They'll create a simple map of their neighborhood showing the location of each residence and identifying the gas and water meters and the main electrical service panel. They'll learn which neighbors need extra help, such as the elderly, those with disabilities, and children home alone. They'll also identify a Neighborhood Gathering Site, where everyone who's able will meet

up after checking their own family and home, and a Neighborhood Care Center, for those with special needs and children home alone.

Key to the program is the Participant Handout. Each family receives one.

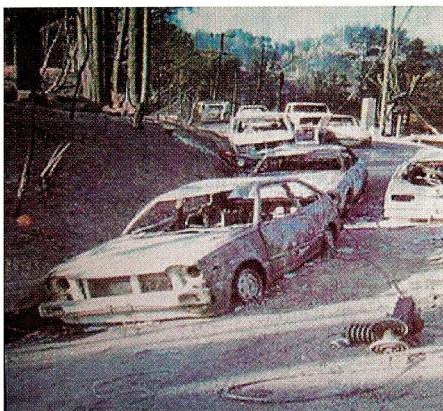
It are the Nine Steps of MYN:

1. Take care of your loved ones.
2. Dress for safety.
3. Check the natural gas at your home.
4. Shut off water at the house main (not at the box in the parkway).
5. Place the HELP or OK sign in your window or on your front door.
6. Put your fire extinguishers on the sidewalk or road edge.
7. Go to the Neighborhood Gathering Site.
8. Form Teams at your Neighborhood Gathering Site.
 - a. Team 1 monitors broadcast stations for situation updates.
 - b. Team 2 checks on elderly neighbors, disabled persons, and children home alone.
 - c. Team 3 checks each home's utilities and responds accordingly.
 - d. Team 4 checks all homes with “HELP” signs displayed and takes appropriate action.
9. Teams return to the Neighborhood Gathering Site to share the Neighborhood's status.

The kit also includes inventory-equipment forms, instructions on mapping your neighborhood and a grid sheet upon which to do it, and contact lists to coordinate to the map (so you know who has what equipment and skills, and to identify the location of specific needs persons). Also included are “HELP/OK” signs.

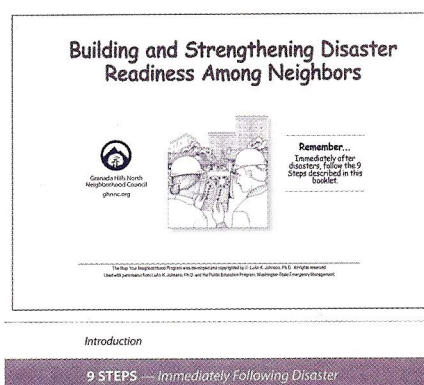
If you're interested in hosting a Map Your Neighborhood presentation, e-mail me at EPrep.sfv@gmail.com. Find more information about MYN at http://www.emd.wa.gov/myn/myn_resources.shtml.

Bill Hopkins is GHNNC's Emergency Preparedness chairman and a CERT callout and Auxiliary Communications Service team member. Reach him at EPrep.sfv@gmail.com. Please send ideas, information, and suggestions for future columns to Bill.



Above, Granada Hills residents Ted Snyder and wife Rena hold a MYN meeting in their home. The Oakland Hills Fire of 1991 destroyed 2,800 homes, killed 25 people and left thousands of folks homeless. The MYN booklet, above, includes the Nine Steps for organizing your neighborhood.

Photo courtesy of Bill Hopkins





Southern California Preparedness Foundation

Is Your Family Prepared for the Next Really BIG Disaster?

Get Prepared with the FREE *Map Your Neighborhood* Program

Problem: In an emergency, we're conditioned to call 9-1-1 for help, and that works just fine. But in a *disaster*, where emergency responders (fire suppression, emergency medical, law enforcement, and utilities) are unable to respond quickly, maybe not for *days*, we'll be on our own. *What if your well-being or survival immediately following a disaster depends not only on what you know, but on what your neighbors know? Wouldn't you want them trained as well?*

Solution: The FREE *Map Your Neighborhood* (or MYN, pronounced "mine") program is designed to show you, your family, and neighbors, in about 2-3 hours, how to make the most of those precious *golden sixty minutes* immediately following a disaster. It teaches how best to care for you, your family, and your property, and to collaborate and cooperate with each other to do the same for the neighborhood following a disaster. For the MYN program, 10-25 families are considered a neighborhood, fewer in rural areas, whether they be single-family homes, condos, townhomes, or apartments, and whether occupants are renters or owners.

How does it work? You invite your neighbors to your home for a presentation of the program. A trained volunteer facilitator from our team will be assigned to work with you to ensure a successful implementation, and will bring all training materials on the day of your MYN meeting. Through a series of short videos and practical sessions, you and your neighbors will learn the **9 Steps** to take immediately following a disaster. You'll develop a Neighborhood Skills and Equipment Inventory. You'll create a simple map of your neighborhood showing the location of each residence and identifying the location of gas and water meters, and the main electrical service panel. You'll learn which neighbors need extra help, such as the elderly, those with any disability, and children home alone. You'll also identify a **Neighborhood Gathering Site** (where everyone who's able will meet up after checking their own family and home) and a **Neighborhood Care Center** (where those with special needs and children home alone can gather). It is very important that these locations be within your defined neighborhood boundaries, and not a distant or unfamiliar location. The goal here is to reduce stress, not increase stress by immediately being in unfamiliar surroundings.

The "shingle": Key to the program is the invaluable Participant Handout, affectionately dubbed the *shingle*, due to its handy tabbed construction. Each family receives a shingle during the training, and working together under the guidance of the facilitator, the shingles are personalized to your neighborhood. In the shingle are the 9 Steps, inventory/equipment forms, instructions, and a grid sheet for mapping your neighborhood, contact lists to match to the map (so you know who has what equipment and skills and the location of specific-needs persons). Also included are "HELP/OK" signs that are to be placed in a first-story front window as soon as possible after the disaster to help you and your neighbors best deploy their collective resources.

The secret: The secret to MYN's effectiveness is the combination of the personalized shingle, effective video instructions, personal attention from the trained volunteer facilitator, and personal instruction tailored to your neighborhood. When you know how to respond after a disaster, it makes all the difference and can save lives and reduce property damage. That's an excellent return on a few hours' worth of investment.

How do I get started? This program is presented at *no cost* to neighborhoods that wish to take the training. Our contributors subsidize the program so that cost is not a hindrance to getting *everyone* prepared. Our trained facilitators are dedicated volunteers. Be the hero of your neighborhood! Contact the *Southern California Preparedness Foundation* today to arrange for a MYN presentation!