

Volunteers Teach Community Preparedness

In response to residents' desires to be better informed about what to do when danger threatens, the city of **Westminster, Colorado** (101,000), has developed a community preparedness program. Through the program, community volunteers make presentations on what to do during a variety of emergencies.

Leadership/staffing

A part-time community preparedness program coordinator oversees the program. Fifteen volunteers have received training and are available to give presentations.

Timeline

The program was officially launched in July 2004.

Budget/funding

The program is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. In addition to the salary of the part-time coordinator, the main expenses are giveaways and the community preparedness booklets.

Program description

The program's volunteers participate in a four-hour training session, where they receive a curriculum booklet and learn how to give presentations on different topics. Volunteers meet monthly to discuss their experiences.

Organizations can now request training on a variety of topics and the city usually sends out two volunteers for each session. Volunteers are usually accompanied by the community preparedness program coordinator or the city's emergency coordinator. Sessions can last from a half-hour to four hours. Each participant in the session receives a workbook that was developed by cities and counties in the Denver area. The workbook has five sections:

- Introduction
- Personal and family preparedness
- Fire safety and evacuation

- Terrorism and hazardous materials
- Neighborhood preparedness.

Presentations typically focus on one of the sections of the workbook. Sessions on personal and family preparedness are the most popular and cover assembling a 72-hour kit of essentials needed to survive for three days in the event of winter storms, tornadoes, floods, fire emergencies, toxic spills, or terrorism events. The fire safety and evacuation sessions are taught by firefighters, and the neighborhood preparedness session focuses on learning who one's neighbors are and, for example, who has a four-wheel-drive vehicle that can be used in a snowstorm.

The program is advertised on the city's cable television station and Web site and in the city's newsletter, recreation department programs, and letters to homeowners associations.

Results

The program has provided training for city employees, a local service club, and several churches and neighborhood associations.

Contact

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