



## The Fairfax County Community Resiliency Group (CRG) Program

Neighbors Helping Neighbors  
When It Really Matters  
2019-04-16

***The CRG Mission: The Fairfax County Community Resiliency Group (CRG) Program's mission is to manage and maintain a network of local organizations to support each other and strengthen the whole community by coordinating capabilities and resources to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.***

**Disasters Happen:** Alaska earthquake; California wildfires; hurricanes (Sandy, Katrina, Florence . . .), tornados; severe winter storms; power outages; industrial disasters; terrorism; cyber network failures; pandemics; . . .

**And Disasters Happen in Fairfax County:** Power outages; severe winter storms (snow and ice); tornados; hurricanes; flooding; derecho and wind storms; home and condominium fires; hazardous materials release; . . .

**The idea that it can't happen here, or that it can't happen to me, is simply wrong – it can! IT WILL!** We all need to be better prepared and those who are not directly affected by a disaster can make a very big difference for those who are impacted. Are you prepared and are you ready to help others?

When emergencies happen, first responders can generally deal quickly with the immediate impacts (put the fire out, provide first aid, clear the roads). On a good day, the Fairfax County emergency response network will generally respond within 5 minutes of receiving a 911 dispatch. But during a big disaster, or when the weather is bad, the response can be delayed because of a large volume of calls for assistance. **And during a large scale disaster, the response may be delayed for a long time** [extremely high 911 call volume; downed trees and flooded roads; limited communications (during the derecho, 911 service was down for days); some emergency responders may not be able to get to work]. Is your organization prepared for a major disruption? Will you, your family, your organization, and your neighborhood be able to continue on your own if outside help is not on the way?

After the immediate impact of a disaster, **people directly affected are frequently left to deal with the longer lasting effects on their own** (and these challenges can last for a very long time – years, in some cases). The fire may be out or the storm may be over, but cleaning up and rebuilding following a big disaster is generally left up to the individual(s). A disaster can be devastating to a family, a business, or an organization left with:

- Cleaning up and removing debris
- Dealing with an insurance company (or companies)
- Finding and hiring contractors to make repairs
- Arranging medical care for the sick or injured
- Finding temporary housing; child care; pet care
- Arranging loans
- Identifying and replacing lost and damaged belongings
- Arranging special care for elderly and infirmed, and for people with unique needs
- Replacing medications, medical devices, and equipment

**Many good people in our community can and want to help others impacted by disasters, but often do not know the best way to help.**

Sometimes well-meaning people, attempting to provide help, actually complicate recovery efforts.

- When large disasters occur, people often donate supplies that may not be needed and managing these donations can be a burden on the relief effort.
- Receiving, inventorying, storing, and relocating donations can drain limited resources.
- Untrained or unaccountable volunteers can get hurt and become additional victims requiring help.
- Getting donated items and services to the families that actually need them can be a complicated process, particularly if the affected families have relocated.

So coordination is key. Volunteers can do a lot to help those impacted by disasters, but identifying what help is needed, and where and when the help is needed, can be difficult.

The CRG is a **network of volunteer organizations** interested in providing help to those in need and **coordinating the help** that is available. This enhances the effectiveness of the volunteer efforts and can reduce the time between identifying an unmet need and delivering the assistance.

The CRG Program is looking for organizations (see examples list #1) that have indicated a willingness to become involved. Note that the CRG is a VOLUNTARY program; joining does not commit any organization to provide any particular kind of assistance. Joining the CRG network connects your organization to the information flow that will identify unmet needs and partners your organization with others who can help those in need. We hope you will join our effort.



**CRG Participation:** The focus of the CRG Program is to organize and coordinate volunteer resources to quickly and efficiently get needed assistance where it can do the most good. While individual volunteers are appreciated, the CRG is focused on existing organizations willing to coordinate their members to provide help and services. Unaffiliated individual volunteers may be sought following a disaster, and separate procedures are in place to coordinate the efforts of individuals.

CRG member organizations are asked to identify in advance the kinds of assistance they may be able to provide (see examples list #2). Following a disaster, when a particular need is identified, a call for help can be made to volunteer CRG organizations. **The CRG Program is entirely voluntary.** CRG member organizations can decline to provide help if, for any reason, the organization or its membership is unable or unwilling to help at that time. Nothing about the CRG program restricts a member organization from providing assistance to its own members or others at any time. Providing help to those in need is always encouraged and appreciated.

Preparedness and Recovery Training will be available for CRG organizations to help build and strengthen an effective network to support the overall effort.

Among considerations important to disaster recovery planning is continuity of operations. Organizations that provide regular services to the community need to look closely at whether they will be able to continue to provide those basic services, particularly critical services, if they are also impacted by the disaster. Ensuring that critical community services remain available is a key aspect of resiliency and directly affects the ability of a community to recover quickly.

People and organizations that are prepared for emergencies are less likely to become victims of disasters and every person who does not become a disaster victim is one less person that needs to be rescued and one more person who can help someone else. CRG member organizations will be asked to make sure their members and their organization are, themselves, prepared for disasters. Preparedness training is available. CRG organizations will provide accountability for their volunteers, and ensure their volunteers understand how best to provide help and stay safe.

The CRG Program is evolving and adjustments will be made as improvements and challenges are identified. The goal is to facilitate neighbors helping neighbors.



### **Example List #1: CRG Organizations**

Homeowners Associations  
Citizens Groups and Associations  
Condominium and Apartment Resident Organizations  
Houses of Worship  
Faith Based Organizations  
Community Based Organizations  
Volunteer Groups  
Non-Profit Organizations  
Local Business Groups  
Educational Groups  
Public and Private Schools  
Neighborhood CERT TEAMS  
Neighborhood Watch Groups

### **Example list #2: Types of Assistance CRG Organizations Can Provide (a partial list)**

Local area damage assessment surveys  
Volunteers to assist with disaster clean up and debris removal  
Financial support – donations of money are always welcome  
Warming or cooling centers for displaced or impacted people and families  
Facilities (including parking lots) for collecting, staging, and distributing supplies  
Communications support (computer access, Internet, phone, charging stations)  
Amateur radio operators and equipment  
Temporary shelters for displaced families and individuals  
Temporary care for pets  
Entertainment for children following disasters, particularly if schools are closed  
Meal preparation and distribution  
Personal supplies (clothing, toiletries, etc.)  
Snow clearing teams  
Transportation (4 wheel drive vehicles and drivers)  
Various assistance for underserved populations  
Language services, including for the hearing impaired  
Crowd and traffic assistance  
Friendly neighbors willing to listen  
Spiritual resources and support  
Administrative assistance (coordinating the relief effort and volunteers)  
Assistance reconnecting families



**How the Fairfax County CRG works:**

The Community Resiliency Group is a cooperative effort being coordinated by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the Office of Emergency Management, in conjunction with the Citizen Corps Council; Volunteer Fairfax; Faith Communities in Action (FCIA); and Office for Public Private-Partnership. By bringing together the County Government, Local Businesses, and various community and volunteer organizations, we can improve both preparedness and resilience and help our community avoid or reduce some disasters, and recover more quickly from those we cannot avoid.

Volunteer CRG coordinators will stay connected to the County’s emergency management network. When disasters occur that result in identified unmet needs, requests for assistance will be sent to CRG member organizations, and those who are able to provide assistance will be matched with those needing help.

Also note that when disasters happen outside of Fairfax County, the CRG network can be mobilized in much the same way to make assistance available to other communities.

CRG organizations are encouraged to work and train together to strengthen their preparedness and readiness for disasters.

**Further Information:** The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management will be hosting periodic workshops and information seminars to provide additional information and answer questions from interested organizations. To receive additional information, please reach out to your local CRG representative or one of the other CRG contacts and identify your organization and several points of contact.

Thank you!

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