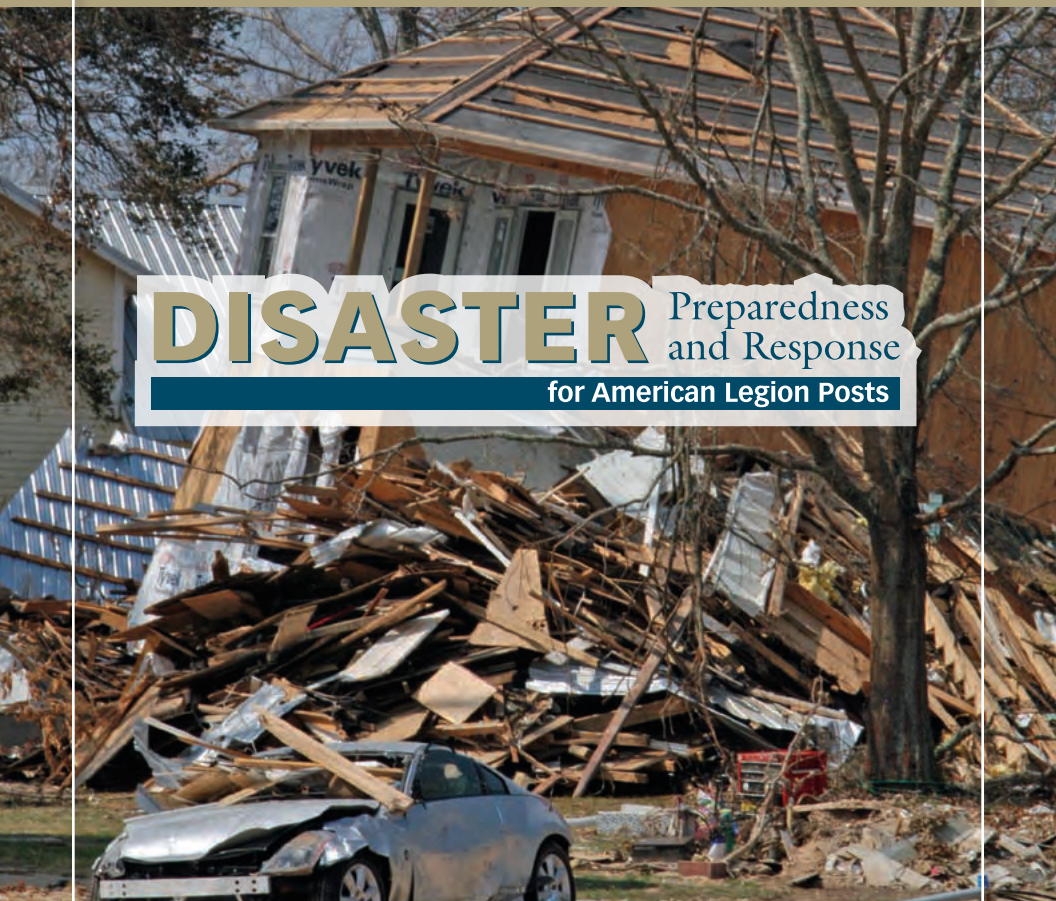




THE AMERICAN LEGION

DISASTER Preparedness and Response for American Legion Posts



A guide to planning, organizing, and executing a disaster preparedness and response support program with your community

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Resolution No. 97: The American Legion Role In Homeland Security	1
Resolution No. 98: The Citizen Corps	3
Department of Homeland Security & The American Legion	5
Introduction	6
Mission	6
Benefits	7
How to Get Started	8
Ways Your Post Can Get Involved	9
Benefits to Post	10
A Family Opportunity	10
Training	11
Citizen Corps Volunteer Opportunities	11
Outreach	15
Disaster Preparedness	15
Disaster Response	16
Checklist	16
Disaster Kits	19
MOUs	21
Handouts/Pamphlets and How to Order	22
Sample Letters	23
Media Tools	27
- Press Releases	28
- Media Advisories	30
- Letters to the editor	32
Conclusion	33
Feedback	34



Bill Branch (left) and Louis Cozolino in front of the short-wave radio station located inside a secured room at American Legion Post 283 in Palisades, CA. The Post will serve as a communication center in case of natural or man-made disasters.

PHOTO: Rick Schmitt - *Palisadian Post*

"We're grateful to the American Legion family for its tireless service to our nation. America's dedicated volunteers embody our nation's great spirit of service and bring our Citizen Corps program to life, helping communities prepare for, respond to and recover from all types of hazards."

...Michael Chertoff, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security

EIGHTY-EIGHTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH AUGUST 29, 30, 31, 2006

Resolution No. 97: The American Legion Role In Homeland Security Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

Whereas, Since before September 11, 2001, our Nation has been at risk to the new and changing invisible threat of terrorism launched from abroad; the United States, even during the War on Terrorism, has no more important mission than protecting the homeland and her citizens from future terrorism; and

Whereas, The National Strategy for Homeland Security aligns and focuses homeland security functions into six critical mission areas, namely, intelligence and warning; border and transportation security; domestic counterterrorism; protecting critical infrastructure; defending against catastrophic terrorism; and emergency preparedness and response; and

Whereas, The responsibility for providing homeland security is shared between federal, state and local governments, and the private sector; many homeland security activities, such as intelligence gathering and border security, are properly accomplished at the federal level: In other circumstances, like first responder capabilities, it is more appropriate for state and local governments to handle these responsibilities; and

Whereas, After the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, Presidential and Congressional budgets identified four priority areas for additional resources and they included: Support first responders, defend against bioterrorism, secure America's borders and to use 21st century technology to secure the homeland; and

Whereas, Although there are Homeland Security appropriations committees in the United States Congress, there are no Homeland Security authorizing committees; and

Whereas, According to the Council for Excellence in Government, the greatest resource the United States has for enhancing homeland security-which has been largely untapped thus far-is the American people; and

Whereas, Polls have indicated that over 62 percent of Americans say they would be willing to spend time volunteering with homeland security plan-

ning, training and practicing drills in their communities, yet some 84 percent of Americans and first responders polled admitted to low awareness of federal, state and local emergency preparedness plans; and

Whereas, As former members of the Armed Forces trained in vigilance and security, who would be more qualified citizens than veterans to assist in many homeland security activities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Salt Lake City, Utah on August 29, 30, 31, 2006, That The American Legion urges its Legionnaires, Posts and Departments to assist in Homeland Security efforts in communities for example, by developing emergency kits and plans; by remaining informed and assisting families, schools, workplaces and communities in developing emergency plans and checklists; by reporting suspicious activity, or working with local councils of the Citizen Corps or community-based organizations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Congressional leadership authorize the formation of Homeland Security authorizing committees to facilitate the Homeland Security budgeting process.

EIGHTY-EIGHTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH AUGUST 29, 30, 31, 2006

Resolution No. 98: The Citizen Corps

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

Whereas, The American Legion is composed of grassroots Posts across the Country which have had experience in community civil preparedness; and

Whereas, In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush announced the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, which is an effort to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility through volunteerism; and

Whereas, Citizen Corps, a component of USA Freedom Corps, is a locally-driven initiative to have every American become an active participant in preventing, preparing for, and responding to crime, natural disasters and other emergencies; and

Whereas, The Citizen Corps Affiliate Program expands the resources and materials available to states and local communities by partnering with Programs and Organizations that offer resources for public education, outreach, and training; represent volunteers interested in helping to make their community safer; or offer volunteer service opportunities to support first responders, disaster relief activities, and community safety efforts; and

Whereas, Citizen Corps Program Affiliates support Citizen Corps Council activities by helping to establish training and information delivery systems for neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, and by helping with family preparedness and crime prevention initiatives in a community or across a region; and

Whereas, The programs of Citizen Corps are jointly managed by the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice and Department of Health and Human Services; and

Whereas, Citizen Corps Councils help drive local citizen participation by coordinating Citizen Corps programs, developing community action plans, assessing possible threats and identifying local resources; and

WHEREAS, The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program

educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, and disaster medical operations. Using their training; and

Whereas, The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program strengthens communities by helping medical, public health and other volunteers offer their expertise throughout the year as well as during local emergencies and other times of community need; and

Whereas, An expanded Neighborhood Watch Program (NWP) Program incorporates terrorism awareness education into its existing crime prevention mission, while also serving as a way to bring residents together to focus on emergency preparedness and emergency response training; and

Whereas, Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers; and

Whereas, The Fire Corps Program has the goal of providing support and supplementing resource-constrained fire departments through the use of civilian volunteers for non-fire suppression related activities, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 29, 30, 31, 2006, That all Departments and Posts of The American Legion are encouraged to become involved in their local Citizen Corps activities, and establish their own programs under an affiliation with Citizen Corps; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion reaffirm its Citizen Corps affiliation, and that the Congress be urged to support and fully fund all components of Citizen Corps.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY & THE AMERICAN LEGION



STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE AMERICAN LEGION

The *Department of Homeland Security (DHS)* and *The American Legion* view community safety and the principle of service to our country as top priorities for their respective organizations and for the American people. As such, our organizations have come together to provide mutual support for *Citizens Corps*.

Under the direction of *DHS*, *Citizen Corps* is a community-based initiative to engage all citizens in hometown security through public education and outreach on community and family preparedness, training opportunities, and volunteer programs to support local emergency responders. Programs under the *Citizens Corps* umbrella include federally sponsored programs and other activities that share the goal of helping communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds. It encourages everyone in America to take an active role in building safer, stronger, and better-prepared communities, to include the critical steps promoted by the *DHS Ready* campaign.

Chartered by Congress in 1919, *The American Legion* serves as an advocate for America's veterans, a friend of the U.S. military, a sponsor of community-based programs for young people, and an advocate for patriotic values. Nearly 2.7 million men and women who served in the U.S. military during an official period of conflict are members, making *The American Legion* the nation's largest veterans group, with nearly 15,000 American Legion Posts worldwide. The organization sponsors volunteer programs on the national and local levels, focusing on three major areas: veterans, young people and the community.


DHS and *The American Legion* agree to work in collaboration to:

- Raise public awareness about appropriate actions to take regarding emergency preparedness, disaster response, and volunteer service;
- Promote the formation or development of local *Citizen Corps Councils* through the participation of the nearly 15,000 *American Legion Posts*, and to assist these Councils in implementing the programs and practices associated with *Citizen Corps*;
- Support activities that cultivate an appreciation for the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship, including special events linking preparedness to citizenship on Flag Day;
- Engage America's youth in public awareness and citizen participation in hometown security, to include the young leaders who participate in Boys State and Boys Nation;
- Assist with providing the VA Hospitals and nursing homes with emergency preparedness and surge capacity support through *Citizen Corps* programs, such as the Medical Reserve Corps;
- Publicly acknowledge the affiliation of *Citizen Corps* and *The American Legion*, which may include website links, co-logos on publications, and references in printed materials, including articles and news releases;
- Coordinate their respective activities to further their shared mission; and
- Keep each other informed of activities conducted in support of *Citizen Corps* and to provide an annual report summarizing those activities.

On this 4th day of January 2005, all parties enter into this agreement in good faith and agree to pursue this mission as stated. Modifications may be made by the written approval of both parties and either party may terminate the affiliation with 90 days written notice.




TOM RIDGE
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY


THOMAS P. CADMUS
NATIONAL COMMANDER
THE AMERICAN LEGION

INTRODUCTION

The common bond we all share as Legionnaires is honorable service as members of the armed forces of the United States.

The military took the time and money to train us as warriors first, then specialists in whatever field we served in the military.

We learned the value of teamwork, discipline and readiness. We helped our buddies overcome obstacles and worked hard to forge our respective units, companies, ships, squadrons, etc. to be the best we could become.

We learned how to survive. We acquired skills in first aid, field survival, and self-defense. We went where we were ordered, served proudly, and came home.

Today, as Legionnaires, we are still serving America, reaching out to our fellow veterans and their families, conducting the programs of our organization for the betterment of our communities.

But since the attacks of September 11, 2001, our world has changed. Once again, Legionnaires are being called upon to do what we do so well – apply our skills, commitment, patriotism and passion for God and country to help our communities become prepared to meet any contingency, natural or man-made.

MISSION

As military veterans we understand the value of readiness. American Legion posts offer islands of expertise, motivation and resources across the country. This guide is designed to provide your post with the information needed to become fully involved in your community's disaster preparedness and response plans.



BENEFITS

The American Legion was founded on the four pillars of strong national security, veterans' affairs and rehabilitation, fostering Americanism and mentoring children and youth. By actively engaging your post in the community with a disaster preparedness program, your post will be fulfilling needs in all four areas.

As partners with the Department of Homeland Security, Legionnaires can step to the forefront in their communities as advocates of national security and preparedness. Similar to the civil defense program that many communities participated in during the Cold War, disaster preparedness for both natural and man-made disasters is crucial for every town. There are many opportunities for every post's participation. This guide will provide a wide-ranging list of possible post involvement from simple awareness to a complete outreach program involving every member of The American Legion family.

Posts can provide vital backup and assistance to local Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers and become involved in their Emergency Operations Plans as well.

By developing public outreach programs, your post can enable local youth to be trained and engaged in the kinds of skills that would be needed in an emergency.

Disaster kit promotions and post activities with emergency personnel as guest speakers would bring the media and the public to your post. Special post disaster readiness drills and events could be tied in with Americanism events such as Independence Day celebrations.

Post disaster preparedness and response with successful outreach to the community, will greatly enhance your post's visibility and commitment to service in the area. By reaching out to the public, the media, youth and other community groups, you will be signaling to everyone – including veterans and potential members of your post, Auxiliary Unit or Sons of The American Legion Squadron – your commitment to making a difference for the better in your town.

HOW TO GET STARTED

There is a check-off list of things to do in this booklet to establish a post disaster preparedness program on page 16.

The first step is to commit to the concept that your post can make a difference in helping your community prepare for any natural disasters or man-made disaster events that might occur. As a nation at war, no community can rule out a terrorist attack that could be nuclear, biological or chemical. No city is immune, from the largest metropolis to the smallest rural towns. The only thing certain about a potential attack is that it is possible.

Appoint a Post Disaster Preparedness and Response (DPR) Chairman/Officer to coordinate your post effort and assemble a team of post volunteers to serve on the post DPR team. Research your post's capabilities and the needs of the community. Brief the Post Executive Committee and obtain commitment to the project. Once a decision to proceed is made, contact the city or country Emergency Management Agency (EMA) or Citizen Corps Council to get the ball rolling. If there is no EMA, consider establishing a local Citizen Corps Council in your town; consider contacting your local officials to establish a local Citizen Corps Council in your community. You can also contact your state Citizen Corps representative who can help guide you through the process.

If your town has an EMA or Citizen Corps Council, set up an appointment to talk with them. Chances are they have already conducted a thorough potential hazard analysis to identify the types of disasters that would likely occur in your area and have an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) already in place. Natural disasters could include hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, ice storms, volcanic eruptions, floods, droughts, mudslides, wildfires, etc. Man-made events could include hazardous chemical spills, train wrecks, nuclear plant accidents, and explosions. Possible terrorist scenarios might include detonation of a "dirty" nuclear device, disease epidemics, water and food supply contamination, and chemical dispersions of such hazards as mustard gas. Each has the ability to cover large areas and cause massive casualties. Immediately following such events, professional first responders will be overloaded; it might take days for help to arrive. Being prepared, trained, and ready to survive – and help others survive – is what The American Legion Post can advocate BEFORE any such event might occur as well as know what to do if a catastrophic event actually happened.

WAYS YOUR POST CAN GET INVOLVED

- Manpower
 - Citizen Corps
 - Local and/or state Citizen Corps Council representation
 - a) Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)
 - b) Fire Corps
 - c) Medical Reserve Corps
 - d) Volunteers in Police Service
 - e) Neighborhood Watch
- Trained veterans with leadership experience
 - Volunteer opportunities with Red Cross, Salvation Army, EMA office, Citizen Corps Council, etc.
- School presentations
- Disaster Supply Kit program and promotion for every home
- Adult and youth training programs at the post
- Town Hall meetings on disaster preparedness
- Programs linking preparedness to citizenship on Flag Day, Independence Day
- Post events during September Disaster Preparedness Month
- Participation in local disaster preparedness exercises
- Infrastructure (if you have a post home)
 - Post home as a designated shelter
 - Food service during disasters
 - Emergency inoculation facility
 - Training facility for adults/youth in disaster preparedness courses
 - a) First Aid/CPR
 - b) CERT training
 - c) EMA first responder courses
 - d) Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) communications/meeting/training center
 - e) Emergency supplies center
 - f) Child care for first responders (during emergencies)
 - g) Backup support for Emergency Operations Center

- h) SKYWARN (severe weather spotters for the National Weather Service)
- i) Mobility Teams (4-wheel drive vehicles) to move medical and emergency personnel during/after severe weather events

The above are just some of the contributions that an American Legion post can make to a community disaster preparedness and response program. There are countless other potential activities and each will be based on the specific needs of your community. For example, following Hurricane Katrina, one American Legion post served as an emergency kidney dialysis center, providing hot food and treatment for area patients in critical need after the storm knocked out power and services at local treatment centers.

BENEFITS TO POST

- High visibility in community
- Media coverage
- Introduction to new potential members for Legion family
- Increased access to schools with new program
- Training opportunities for members
- Guest speakers for post meetings on emergency planning and preparedness
- Close relationship with local government
- Satisfaction of contributing to community preparedness

A FAMILY OPPORTUNITY

While The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary are formal partners with the national Citizen Corps in the Department of Homeland Security by a signed Statement of Affiliation (SOA), posts, units, and squadrons of the Sons of The American Legion should work together in training, outreach to the community and participation in the full range of disaster preparedness activities. Specific areas of readiness might be assigned to each to share in the full spectrum of outreach activities. There are even specific activities that a local chapter of Legion Riders can engage in as well as serve as a response asset for EMA planning.

TRAINING

Ideally, every member of the post should be trained and certified in emergency first aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Initially, the post DPR officer/chairman and team should complete the training and establish a program for post members. Training sessions could be in increments following normal post activities, such as two hours after a fish fry or post dinner, or a Saturday morning. Eventually, your post could schedule training courses in a variety of disaster training courses for adults and youth. Post DPR volunteers should consider becoming instructors in basic disaster courses to facilitate training opportunities for the general public and youth.

With the commitment to activate your post's participation as a Citizen Corps affiliate, comes a vast array of training materials and opportunities both locally and via home study courses.

FEMA offers a long list of home study courses on the Internet that cover the gamut of emergency preparedness and response courses, both for first responders and citizens. Most require only a few hours to complete. By successfully passing a multiple question test online after completing each course, participants are sent a full color, suitable for framing diploma by email from the Emergency Management Institute. Additionally, completion of each course offers Continuing Education Units accepted by many higher learning institutions. Details at: <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWEB/is/crslist.asp>

A post might consider establishing a friendly competition among members for those completing the most courses.

Your local Director of Emergency Management should be able to assist you with specific local training opportunities such as CERT to enhance your post's participation in the community Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). It is important to train BEFORE a potential disaster to be ready and able to contribute to mitigation of any potential disaster hazards.

CITIZEN CORPS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

After September 11, 2001, America witnessed a wellspring of selflessness and heroism. People in every corner of the country asked, "What can I do?" and "How can I help?" Citizen Corps was created to help all Americans answer these questions through public education and outreach, training, and volunteer service. Posts are encouraged to join, or establish, a local Citizen Corps Council.

What is Citizen Corps?

Coordinated nationally by the Department of Homeland Security, the Citizen Corps mission is to bring community and government leaders together to form Citizen Corps Councils which then coordinate the involvement of community members, and non-governmental resources for emergency preparedness, planning, mitigation, response and recovery.

Councils help drive local citizen preparedness and participation by assessing risks, identifying needs and local resources, developing community action plans and coordinating Citizen Corps programs to train and exercise volunteers. These volunteer programs support local emergency responders and include CERT, Fire Corps, Medical Reserve Corps, Neighborhood Watch, and Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS). Some of the established Citizen Corps programs in-place and ready for Legion post involvement include:



The **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program** educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, disaster medical operations and response team organization. When emergencies happen, CERT members can use their training to safely assist others in their neighborhood or workplace. CERTs can give critical support to professional responders, provide immediate assistance to victims, and organize spontaneous volunteers at a disaster site. CERTs also help with non-emergency community service projects that help improve public safety. The CERT program is part of the Citizen Corps movement to engage all Americans in community safety. Participants reflect the composition of the community and vary in age, physical capacity, and previous experience.



The **Fire Corps** promotes the use of citizen advocates to enhance the capacity of resource-constrained fire and rescue departments at all levels: volunteer, combination, and career. Citizen advocates can assist local fire/EMS departments in a range of activities including fire prevention and life safety education, youth programs, administrative support and more. Fire Corps provides resources to assist fire and rescue departments in creating opportunities for citizen advocates and promotes citizen participation. Fire Corps is funded through DHS and is managed and implemented through a partnership between the National Volunteer Fire Council and the International Association of Fire Chiefs.



An expanded **Neighborhood Watch Program (NWP)** incorporates terrorism awareness education into its existing crime prevention mission, while also serving as a way to bring residents together to focus on emergency preparedness and emergency response training. Funded by the Department of Justice (DOJ), Neighborhood Watch is administered by the National Sheriffs' Association. Posts can establish a local program by contacting their county sheriff's office or local law enforcement agency.



The **Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program** strengthens communities by providing a way for medical, public health and other volunteers to offer their expertise throughout the year, as well as during local emergencies and times of need. MRC volunteers work in coordination with existing local emergency response programs and also supplement existing community public health initiatives, such as outreach and prevention, immunization programs, blood drives, case management, care planning, and other efforts. The MRC program is housed in the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General under the Department of Health and Human Services. This is an excellent program for members of The American Legion family to volunteer who are physicians, nurses, medics, lab techs and other medical or public health professionals.



Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers. VIPS serves as a gateway to resources and information for and about law enforcement volunteer programs. Funded by DOJ, VIPS is managed and implemented by International Association of Chiefs of Police. Contact your local law enforcement agency to see if they have one in place or to find out how your post can help.

The Citizen Corps Affiliate Program expands the resources and materials available to states and local communities by partnering with Programs and Organizations that offer resources for public education, outreach, and training; represent volunteers interested in helping to make their community safer; or offer volunteer service opportunities to support first responders, disaster relief activities, and community safety efforts. The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary are part of the Citizen Corps Affiliate Program.

Citizen Corps is coordinated nationally by the Department of Homeland Security. DHS also works closely with the **Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)** to promote volunteer service activities that support homeland security and community safety. CNCS is a federal agency that operates nationwide service programs such as AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America. Participants in these programs may support Citizen Corps Council activities by helping to establish training and information delivery systems for neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, and by helping with family preparedness and crime prevention initiatives in a community or across a region.

As a member of the local Citizen Corps, your American Legion post can have a real impact on the preparedness of your neighborhood and community.



OUTREACH

The American Legion Post should have three Disaster Preparedness and Response goals:

1. Train post DPR team and post members for basic disaster preparedness and response (first aid, CPR, AED, etc.);
2. Develop an outreach program to educate the community, provide training, involve youth and the media in learning the importance of disaster preparedness and having disaster kits;
3. Have a Post Response Plan in place and coordinated with your local Emergency Management agency that lays out specifically what your post will do in the event of a local disaster.

Your post can be fully involved in disaster preparedness and response in many ways or serve simply as a backup asset to local Emergency Management. How engaged your post will be is a function of local needs, member motivation and enthusiasm, and desire to further serve the community. Whatever your post decides, remember that emergency preparedness and survival are topics that affect every American, a natural for veterans to execute and a tremendous project for younger veterans to embrace as new members of The American Legion.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Preparing for potential disasters is a task that most people tend to put off. This is the area where your American Legion Post can have the greatest impact. There are few more important community relations efforts than working with your friends and neighbors BEFORE a disaster strikes to help them get ready to safely survive any catastrophic event that might occur. Legionnaires can be proactive in holding awareness events, providing training, involving youth, and engaging other civic groups in education, training, and disaster survival programs. Whatever your post decides to do in this arena, it will achieve public recognition as a ‘mover and shaker’ that is working to make a difference in the community. Folks like to be a part of organizations that get things done. Keep those membership applications handy.

DISASTER RESPONSE

This is the second part of your DPR plan – to be implemented when disaster strikes. Based on the needs of the community, your post’s resources, assets, and available post volunteers, this part of the DPR plan will vary from no response capability to full involvement. Will your post home serve as an officially designated shelter? Will you have enough volunteers to provide food and comfort to evacuees? Will your post members be ready to respond with their neighborhood or workplace CERT? Will the post have emergency power and communications? Do you have a shift schedule of volunteers to staff the post during emergencies? A good plan in place, coordinated with your local Emergency Management Agency/Citizens Corps Council, will ensure that everyone will know exactly what to do, where to go and when to do it should disaster strike.

CHECKLIST

- Appoint a Disaster Preparedness and Response Officer/Chairman and team to study post resources and develop plan.
- Obtain Post Executive Committee approval.
- Initiate contact with local Emergency Management/Citizen Corps officials to present Post participation opportunity. Take this booklet along to show.
- Run story in post newsletter to inform members of opportunities.
- Keep your District Commander apprised of progress.
- Establish liaison with other agencies, Red Cross, etc. to review training opportunities.
- Begin training for DPRO and team.
- Advertise FEMA online courses for membership.
- Ask Director of Emergency Management to talk at Post meeting about partnership.
- Schedule a first aid training course for membership in conjunction with meetings, dinners, etc. with other courses to follow.
- Develop a Post Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan.
- Develop a Post Disaster Preparedness Outreach Plan to include media coverage of training, a schedule of post training courses open to youth

and adults, post events and speakers on disaster topics, potential sponsors for post organized disaster preparedness events, operating budget if applicable (things you want to do but can't get a sponsor for or will need funds to execute). Plan should include a three-year milestone approach to plan ahead and provide plenty of time to coordinate, grow, fund, train and recognize volunteers.

- ❑ If you have a post home, begin acquiring disaster supplies such as blankets, cots, disaster kits, first aid supplies, an automated external defibrillator (AED), emergency lights, etc.
- ❑ Consider the purchase of an emergency power generator (Uninterrupted Power Supply –UPS) for use during disasters when electrical power goes out. If post is designated an official shelter, grants may be available or local sponsors may help fund.
- ❑ Announce beginning of post DPR affiliation to media. Issue media advisory, offer interviews with Post Commander and DRP officer.
- ❑ Advise media of post events/meetings with emergency management speakers.
- ❑ Advertise free FEMA online Internet courses in post newsletter. Consider a recognition program for members with most courses completed, free dinner, certificate, etc.
- ❑ Plan a town hall meeting at your post to discuss disaster preparedness in light of current terrorism threats; ensure you have knowledgeable guest speakers, local fire and police officials and your town Director of Emergency Management. Make it a media event and start a media campaign at least a month in advance.
- ❑ Send letters to the editor of the local newspaper about your post's program; invite veterans to join the effort and the public to take advantage of the training.
- ❑ Contact local VA hospital (if applicable) to advise of your post's DPRO trained resources and volunteer assistance.
- ❑ Sign up as members veterans in your community who are police officers, fire fighters, EMTs, emergency planners, etc. Invite them to join the post DPR team as instructors, speakers, coordinators.
- ❑ Invite the local Amateur Radio Emergency Service Emergency Coordinator to speak at a post meeting. Discuss ways that the post can work with ARES assets to establish an emergency communication capability at your post.

- ❑ Encourage post DPR team to become First Aid/CPR instructor certified to hold public training sessions both at your post and for adult groups and schools.
- ❑ Plan a major disaster preparedness post event for September in support of National Disaster Preparedness Month. Consider bringing fire, police, and emergency management exhibits to your post with guest speakers, games, food, and public recognition of local citizens active in Citizen Corps volunteerism.
- ❑ Host CERT training at your post for members, their families and guests and post neighbors in the area. Invite veterans. Publicize in media. Contact local EMA/Citizens Corps Council to identify resources and schedule the training.
- ❑ Build a Disaster Preparedness Kit to use as an example (or buy one commercially available off the shelf). Consider public events where the public can come together with merchants to assemble their own from available DISCOUNTED supplies; coordinate with Chamber of Commerce for public event.
- ❑ Contact Chamber of Commerce to request dissemination of information in their regular newsletters to area businesses. Include an invitation to veterans to join your post to help bring the plan to fruition.
- ❑ Order handouts on disaster preparedness (see resource list in this guide).
- ❑ Encourage post members to attend a severe weather spotter training class conducted by the National Weather Service.
- ❑ Send feedback about your DPR activities to National Headquarters at pr@legion.org.

DISASTER KITS

Recommended by Department of Homeland Security

When preparing for a possible emergency situation, it's best to think first about the basics of survival: **fresh water, food, clean air and warmth.**

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- **Water**, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- **Food**, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- **First aid kit**
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps

Additional Items to Consider Adding to an Emergency Supply Kit:

- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container
- Cash or traveler's checks and change
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information from www.ready.gov

- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person (consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate)
- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes (consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate)
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper. In an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water (do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners)
- Fire Extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for household members

Additional Kit Items to Meet Specific Household Needs:

- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet(s)

Disaster kits are available commercially from a variety of sources but can be assembled easily from household supplies or locally available materials. Following major natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, or in the event of a large terrorist attack, it is clear that it could take days – even longer - for help to arrive. Americans need to be ready and self-sufficient but too many are busy with their everyday lives to take the time to assemble one. Every home and business should have at least one kit of sufficient size for every member of the family or employees. Publicizing the importance of having a kit ready should be a major objective for every Legion post across the country.

MOUs

A **memorandum of understanding (MOU)** is a legal document describing a bilateral agreement between parties. It expresses a convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action, rather than a legal commitment. It is a more formal alternative to a gentlemen's agreement. It is a contract, so you may wish to have it reviewed by legal counsel.

A MOU would be appropriate, for example, between your post and your town's Emergency Management Agency, to identify your facility as a designated shelter for use by the public in the aftermath of a storm or other disaster. It would solidify the commitment of your post to be ready when needed and would set forth the requirements agreed to in advance between your post and the EMA. Such conditions might be that the post would supply bedding, food, and accommodations for X number of persons for a minimum of a certain number of days, etc.

MOUs can be used to solidify understanding between your post and any number of groups or agencies in support of a disaster preparedness and response plan. Such agreements might include an MOU with the local Red Cross chapter or police or fire-rescue squad to conduct one night of training at your post per quarter, etc.

While not necessary, an MOU is a good faith way for both parties to show their commitment to success in ensuring that the needs of the community will be provided for when an emergency occurs.

HANDOUTS/PAMPHLETS AND HOW TO ORDER

There are a number of pamphlets on disaster preparedness and programs available free to download online or order in quantities from the Department of Homeland Security. The pamphlet, “**Are You Ready?**” is an ideal publication for every citizen to develop an initial awareness of the need to be prepared. Posts can stamp their local contact information on the back and distribute them during post events or public venues.

Many Emergency Management Offices also have a wide array of pamphlets available on various topics, including surviving different types of catastrophes.

Full information is available through the following Internet online resources:

- Department of Homeland Security: www.ready.gov
- State and Local Agencies: www.ready.gov/america/local/
- Are You Ready?: www.fema.gov/areyouready/
- CERT Program: www.citizencorps.gov/CERT
- Citizen Corps: www.citizencorps.gov/ready/
- Citizens Corps Pubs: www.citizencorps.gov/ready/cc_pubs.shtm
- FEMA: www.fema.gov
- FEMA Independent Study Program: training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/
- SKYWARN: www.skywarn.org
- Storm Spotters: spotterguides.us
- National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster: www.nvoad.org/
- Tornado Frequently Asked Questions: www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org/
- 30 Tips for Preparedness: www.dhs.gov/xcitizens/editorial_0711.shtm
- Amateur Radio: www.emergency-radio.org/
- Links for Citizens: www.dhs.gov/xcitizens/

SAMPLE LETTERS

The following letters are examples of outreach to various organizations and groups in your community that can help you spread the word about your post DPR campaign. As with all correspondence, personalize them as appropriate.

(POST LETTERHEAD)

XXXXXX XXXXXXXX

Mayor, City of XXXXX

Dear Mayor _____:

As an affiliate of national Citizen Corps within the Department of Homeland Security, The American Legion has agreed to do whatever possible to raise public awareness about emergency preparedness, disaster response, and volunteer service.

Our post would like to meet with you and area Emergency Management officials to offer our assistance, volunteers and resources as an adjunct to our town's Emergency Operations Plan. I believe you are aware of our current outreach programs to area youth and our motto: Still Serving America.

As wartime veterans, we understand far too well the need for our citizens to be ready to survive major disasters, particularly potential threats from terrorist attacks as long as our nation remains at war.

Post _____ stands ready to help energize our community to become disaster ready and provide whatever assistance we can to foster preparedness and enhance response capabilities as an affiliate of the Citizen Corps and the Department of Homeland Security.

I look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached during the day at _____.

Sincerely,

Post Commander

Copy to: Director Emergency Management

(POST LETTERHEAD)

Dear Chamber of Commerce President:

As a senior representative of our Chamber of Commerce, you are probably familiar with our motto, “Still Serving America.” Over the years, we have actively provided service and activities for our veterans and for our youth. We are proud to announce that American Legion Post _____ has a new service initiative that we would like to bring to your attention — one that will benefit every man, woman and child in the community.

As a partner with the Department of Homeland Security, The American Legion has agreed to do whatever possible to raise public awareness about emergency preparedness, disaster response and volunteer service.

Our post will meet with our area Emergency Management officials to offer our assistance and volunteer our manpower and resources as an adjunct to our town’s Emergency Operations Plan.

I ask for your help in promoting our initiative to assist the community’s Emergency Management efforts to your members. As wartime veterans, we understand far too well the need for our citizens to be ready to survive major disasters, particularly potential threats from terrorist attacks as long as our nation remains at war. Many of your members employ veterans and may themselves be veterans. We welcome their ideas and their participation as we stand together to protect our community when disaster strikes.

Post _____ stands ready to help energize our community to become disaster ready and provide whatever assistance we can to foster preparedness and enhance response capabilities as an affiliate of the Citizens Corps and the Department of Homeland Security.

I look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached during the day at _____.

Sincerely,

Post Commander

Copy to: Director Emergency Management

(POST LETTERHEAD)

Dear Pastor / Father / Reverend / Rabbi:

As one of our spiritual leaders in our community, you are probably familiar with our motto, "Still Serving America." Over the years, we have actively provided service and activities for our veterans and for our youth. We are proud to announce that American Legion Post _____ has a new service initiative that we would like to bring to your attention -- one that will benefit every man, woman and child in the community.

As a partner with the Department of Homeland Security, The American Legion has agreed to do whatever possible to raise public awareness about emergency preparedness, disaster response and volunteer service.

Our post will meet with our area Emergency Management officials to offer our assistance and volunteer our manpower and resources as an adjunct to our town's Emergency Operations Plan.

I ask for your help in promoting our initiative to assist the community's Emergency Management efforts to your congregation. As wartime veterans, we understand far too well the need for our citizens to be ready to survive major disasters, particularly potential threats from terrorist attacks as long as our nation remains at war. Perhaps some members of your congregation are veterans. We welcome their ideas and their participation as we stand together to protect our community when disaster strikes.

Post _____ stands ready to help energize our community to become disaster ready and provide whatever assistance we can to foster preparedness and enhance response capabilities as an affiliate of the Citizens Corps and the Department of Homeland Security.

I look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached during the day at _____.

Sincerely,

Post Commander

Copy to: Director Emergency Management

(POST LETTERHEAD)

Dear Mr./Ms:

As one of our community leaders, you are probably familiar with our motto, "Still Serving America." Over the years, we have actively provided service and activities for our veterans and for our youth. We are proud to announce that American Legion Post _____ has a new service initiative that we would like to bring to your attention -- one that will benefit every man, woman and child in the community.

As a partner with the Department of Homeland Security, The American Legion has agreed to do whatever possible to raise public awareness about emergency preparedness, disaster response and volunteer service.

Our post will meet with our area Emergency Management officials to offer our assistance and volunteer our manpower and resources as an adjunct to our town's Emergency Operations Plan.

I ask for your help in promoting our initiative to assist the community's Emergency Management efforts within your circle of influence. As wartime veterans, we understand far too well the need for our citizens to be ready to survive major disasters, particularly potential threats from terrorist attacks as long as our nation remains at war. Perhaps some of your colleagues are veterans. We welcome their ideas and their participation as we stand together to protect our community when disaster strikes.

Post _____ stands ready to help energize our community to become disaster ready and provide whatever assistance we can to foster preparedness and enhance response capabilities as an affiliate of the Citizens Corps and the Department of Homeland Security.

I look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached during the day at _____.

Sincerely,

Post Commander

Copy to: Director Emergency Management

MEDIA TOOLS

The following pages contain examples of media news releases, media advisories, and a letter to the editor. Use a news release when providing information about a training opportunity, the formation of a team open to the community, an outreach to schools or other activity that requires a lengthy description or explanation. Try to write the release as you might expect to see it published; sometimes newspapers print them word for word. Usually, however, your release will be referred by the editor to a reporter who will contact you for quotes and more information that he or she will develop as a story.

Use a media advisory to send to a city editor or television news assignment desk editor to let them know of an event they should send a reporter and crew to cover. Notice of a forthcoming press conference, a large outdoor event such as an open house with local fire and police units on display or a post meeting featuring a guest speaker about a “hot” topic such as potential terrorist attack in your community, should be provided to the media as advisories.

A letter to the editor can be written at any time to a newspaper but should be about a timely topic in the news, of interest to most readers, and should generally not be more than 250 words. If published, they generally appear below or adjacent to the publication’s editorials. Most newspapers provide an email address where you can send them directly to the Opinion Page editor. The topic of disaster preparedness affects all citizens so well crafted letters are likely to be selected. Be sure to set your computer to receive a “read receipt” prior to sending the email so that you know the editor received it. Having a second set of eyes review the letter for accuracy, spelling and conciseness is always a good practice.

The following examples provide the standard format for each of these media products. Use them as templates to keep the media apprised of your post’s progress in your DPR program campaign.

(POST LETTERHEAD)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEGIONNAIRES LAUNCH DISASTER READINESS CAMPAIGN

TOWN NAME (Month, day, 200X) – Wartime veterans who once used their survival skills at war today are launching a campaign to help citizens achieve readiness to survive any potential natural or man-made disaster that might strike this area.

“Besides the possible severe weather threats everybody knows about, we remain a nation at war with terrorists who continue to prove their ability to conduct disastrous attacks in the most unexpected places,” said (Name), American Legion Post ### Commander in (Town). “All of us need to be prepared in the event that disaster strikes, with a survival plan, supplies and the knowledge needed to hold out until help arrives or emergency conditions return to normal.”

The American Legion and the Department of Homeland Security have agreed to work in collaboration to raise public awareness about appropriate actions to take regarding emergency preparedness, disaster response, and volunteer service through local Citizen Corps programs. Post ### will work in conjunction with local Emergency Management officials to promote disaster readiness, disaster kits, emergency skill training and coordination of an area wide awareness campaign.

“Our goal is to assist our community in helping to prevent, prepare for, and respond to terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds,” (Last Name) said. “Our post has formed a Disaster Preparedness and Response Team to coordinate the effort and facilitate training opportunities and events in our area.”

(Last Name) said that more information will be forthcoming including the organization of Citizen Corps Councils. For more information, call ### ####.

– 30 –

Contact: (Name and Tel. Number)

(POST LETTERHEAD)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEGION POST FORMING CERT TEAM; VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

TOWN NAME (Month, day, 200X) – American Legion Post ### is promoting Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training here and is inviting all interested volunteers to get involved in being prepared.

The CERT Program provides disaster preparedness training about hazards that may impact this area and basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help.

The CERT training will be taught by a team of first responders from (Name of local agency providing instructors) which also sponsors the local CERT Program. The CERT training at the post will be held weekly in 2 1/2 hour sessions, one evening a week over a 7-week period starting (Day, date, at location). CERT graduates will receive ID cards, vests, and helmets.

The American Legion and the national Citizen Corps Program are working in collaboration to raise public awareness about appropriate actions to take regarding emergency preparedness, disaster response, and volunteer service.

For more information, call The American Legion Post ### Disaster Preparedness and Response Team at ###-####.

– 30 –

Contact: (Name and Tel. Number)

(POST LETTERHEAD)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Month, Day, 200X

MEDIA ADVISORY

Disaster Response Official to Lay Out Terrorist Threat to Area Tonight

Who:	(Name), (Town/County) Director of Emergency Management
What:	Will address American Legion Post ### on potential terrorist targets and threats to the region. He will discuss response operations and the Emergency Operations Plan in place to respond to potential terrorist events as well as natural disaster in the area.
When:	Day, Date
Where:	American Legion Post ###, (Address)
Background	The American Legion and the national Citizen Corps Program in the Department of Homeland Security have partnered to help raise public awareness about appropriate actions to take regarding emergency preparedness, disaster response and volunteer service. As a Citizens Corps affiliate, American Legion Post ### has launched a disaster preparedness campaign in the region.
Contact:	(Name and Telephone Number)

The 2.7 million-member American Legion is the nation's largest veterans organization with more than 14,000 posts located across America.

(POST LETTERHEAD)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Month, Day, 200X

MEDIA ADVISORY

Disaster Preparedness Rally Offers Action, Exhibits, Games and Training

Who:	Emergency First Responders, Veterans, Vendors, Bands
What:	Outdoor rally coordinated by American Legion Post ###'s Disaster Preparedness and Response Team featuring police, fire, and military displays and demonstrations. Food vendors and live bands will provide entertainment. Training classes and disaster information will be on site.
When:	Day, Date
Where:	American Legion Post ###, (Address)
Background	The American Legion and the national Citizen Corps Program within the Department of Homeland Security have partnered to help raise public awareness about appropriate actions to take regarding emergency preparedness, disaster response and volunteer service. As a Citizens Corps affiliate, American Legion Post ### has launched a disaster preparedness campaign in the region.
Contact:	(Name and Telephone Number)

The 2.7 million-member American Legion is the nation's largest veterans organization with more than 14,000 posts located across America.

(POST LETTERHEAD)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Newspaper Name

235-words

Sent by E-mail

Date

Dear Editor:

Since September 11, 2001, we have been a nation at war. It seems a day does not go by that we don't hear the term "terrorist" in the news.

Our nation has also had its share of natural disasters – hurricanes, deadly tornadoes, firestorms and even earthquakes. What we need to remember is that no community is immune to the wraths of nature; nor can we say with certainty that a terrorist will never attack our town.

The American Legion has teamed up with the Department of Homeland Security's Citizen Corps to help spread the word: Now is the time to prepare. Post ### is starting a public awareness campaign to help families prepare a basic disaster kit in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. If a large-scale disaster were to strike our town, first responders would be inundated. We should all be ready to survive for at least 72 hours on our own.

As wartime veterans, we understand the value of being prepared. Don't put off taking the few short hours to assemble a disaster kit to keep stored and ready. For a list of items and where you can get them, stop by Post ### and ask for our free brochure or call us at ###-####.

We also invite area veterans to join Post ###'s Disaster Preparedness and Response Team to help us ensure that our area is ready for any disaster.

(Name)

American Legion Post ### Commander

Town

(Telephone Number to Confirm)

CONCLUSION

As an activity that touches all four pillars of The American Legion, disaster preparedness and response is an integral part of what we stand for as Legionnaires. Helping ensure that our fellow citizens are prepared for the catastrophes of nature is a basic duty of being a good neighbor. Promoting the training, education and survival tools to survive an enemy terrorist attack of a nuclear, biological or chemical nature is something that we as military veterans can do. After all, most of us have been through NBC (nuclear – biological – chemical) training when we were in uniform as members of the U.S. military. As long as we are a nation at war and there are terrorists sworn to kill all Americans, every town is a potential target of a terrorist cell. Who better than those who have served in our armed forces to advocate the need to always be prepared?

Whatever level of disaster preparedness and response involvement your post undertakes, know that the Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons of The American Legion who serve in this endeavor will be making a very real difference for the better in your town. It is an effort that may very well save lives.

FEEDBACK

The success that your post has achieved in enhancing disaster readiness in your community is a story we want to share with other posts around the country. Perhaps you have found a way to overcome a problem or have found a totally new service that your American Legion post can provide the community in responding to a disaster situation.

We'd like to know about it.

Please email us information about your DPR effort and how it has impacted your post and community. Also, feel free to ask us any questions you might have in developing your post's DPR plans. Contact us by e-mail at:

National Security & Foreign Relations Division: NSFR@legion.org

Public Relations Division: pr@legion.org

Posts that have established a DPR Team and are participating in community disaster preparedness and response activities are eligible to receive The American Legion National Commander's Post Disaster Preparedness Certificate as testament to your service. Fill out the feedback card signed by the post commander and mail it to national headquarters. A certificate suitable for framing will be sent to your post.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Your post has made the commitment to help your community prepare for natural or man-made disasters by activating a Disaster Preparedness and Response Team and joining with the Department of Homeland Security and your local Emergency Management Agency to educate your fellow citizens about the need to be ready to survive catastrophic incidents.

As a tribute to your service and outreach, the National Commander of The American Legion will send your post a Certificate of Disaster Preparedness that can be displayed as testament to your participation.

Fill in the information below, tear (or cut) off this page, and fold it so that the self-addressed information on the back can be processed by the United States Postal Service. We'll do the rest!

<input type="text"/>		
Post/Unit/Squadron Name and Number		
<input type="text"/>		
DPR Officer/Chairman		
Commander/President/Commander:		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Printed Name		Signature
<input type="text"/>		
Street Address		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
City	State	ZIP
Preparedness Activities being conducted:		
<input type="text"/>		
Public Events:		
<input type="text"/>		
Media Coverage:		
<input type="text"/>		
Community feedback:		
<input type="text"/>		
Future Plans:		
<input type="text"/>		

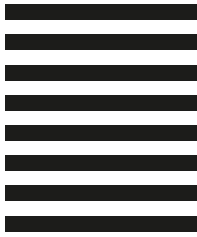


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THE AMERICAN LEGION
PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION
P.O. BOX 1055
INDIANAPOLIS IN 46209-9910



fold here

To mail:

- Remove back cover.
- Fold at dotted line.
- Tape shut (do not staple).
- Drop in mail.