

Map Your Neighborhood Training Promotes Community Preparedness

Jul 2, 2009, By Elaine Rundle

On Monday the Thurston County, Wash., Emergency Management office hosted a **Map Your Neighborhood** training session to arm citizens with emergency preparedness information. The program focuses on the train-the-trainer model, where a **neighborhood** participant attends the meeting with the emergency management officials and is given information on how to facilitate an emergency planning meeting in his or her neighborhood.

The program aims to help communities identify the location of useful materials in their neighborhoods, like natural gas and propane tanks, which residents have useful skills for emergency response, and residents who have specific needs that must be attended to in an emergency.

Vivian Eason, emergency management coordinator of **Thurston County Emergency Management**, said the state provides the information and materials and it's up to individual counties to host the training sessions. She said the county has been hosting training sessions for the last couple of years and usually there are three to four sessions held a year.

The county provides the citizens who attend the session a DVD that they can share with neighbors. That way the citizens don't have to do the presentation for their neighbors, and the DVD provides step-by-step instructions on how to participate in the program.

"We want all of our residents to be personally prepared, and part of the Map Your Neighborhood program is to know who your neighbors are and who may have special needs," Eason said. "So that's part of the program, knowing your neighbors and who you can depend on, and who can help who in responding and taking care of folks."

She said about 25 residents attended the meeting on Monday. The county doesn't closely track participants, but knows which communities are working on the program or have signed up to participate, according to Eason.

"We don't track it that closely, but we have some pretty big communities that are working on getting organized," she said. "It's a slow process because one community's like 400 homes, so they break down into about 20 homes for each block."