

Minutes of BDPNN Meeting
"Family Disaster Plans and Caring for Children"
1 Nov 2012

Norine Smith opened the meeting and welcomed all the attendees. She introduced the staff members and told the group about the grant proposal submitted for funding to continue work with the underrepresented groups in Berkeley. She also told everyone to mark their calendars for the next City-wide exercise to be held on 27 April 2013, with the emphasis on fire and damage assessment. The next BDPNN meeting will be held on 7 Feb, and it will also cover damage assessment in preparation for the exercise. In addition, there is a great website that covers the topic of family disaster plans, which is the topic for today's meeting.
<http://www.disastercenter.com/guide/family.htm>

Norine then introduced the first speaker, Margit Roos-Collins, who volunteers with the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) in a variety of ways. She first became involved about 12 years ago when she went to her first meeting of the Berkeley Disaster Council. The guest speaker was from the BUSD, and the message received was that the threat of disaster was not taken seriously. The BUSD representative dismissed the problem by saying that there is only a 1/4 chance that the quake will occur while the children are in school. Margit got involved, and within a few years each school had a supply cache for disaster response. She worked with Barbara Morita and the superintendent of the school district to make the list of supplies. Then they focused on the training to use the caches properly. In addition, the schools were retrofit for quakes in the 1990's, and a lot of money was spent on making the buildings sturdy enough to survive the quake so everyone could get out. Now, the focus is on fixing the glass windows located along the exit paths to avoid broken glass.

Due to these efforts, all the schools now use the same terminology and are organized using the Incident Command System (ICS). Unfortunately there isn't a lot of time in the school schedule for students or teachers to learn CERT-type classes, but they are getting the training done as best as possible, taught by the Berkeley Fire Dept. With this training, the evacuation plans for the buildings now include a meeting place with role call. Once that is accomplished, the action teams go to the cache to get their gear. There is no food in the cache (only water), since that is a big-expense item that needs to be replaced often, so the schools will rely upon the local businesses or neighbors to help them take care of the kids until their parents come to get them. The emphasis is on student care: first aid, blankets, water bottles, latrines, etc. In addition, BUSD had a practice drill last year, with an ICS and simulated injuries. The plan is to close the campus after the quake, and in the drill it took 3 hours before they were ready to release children to their parents, so keep that in mind. The policy is that, for K-5 grades, no kids are allowed out alone, and they must be picked up by an adult that is on the permission form. There is a push to have the permission forms simplified so that one form will contain all the information needed. For 6-8 grades, the kids are not restricted from leaving, but they are not encouraged to leave either. For high school, the kids are allowed to leave when they want. The biggest threat is considered to be downed power lines, with the youngest children the most vulnerable if they are not looking.

If you are interested in disaster preparedness of the schools, contact the principal of your school to get information or to help out as a volunteer.

The next speaker was Sandy Miarecki, and she talked about what happens outside the schools after a quake. If the quake happens during the school day, the BUSD has things under

control. But, what if the quake happens at another time, when the kids are around the area? If you have an organized disaster group, you need to consider Child Care as a functional group. First, there will be random children in the neighborhood who may not know what to do. Second, there may be young children who escape from their houses, but their parents are trapped inside. Third, you will need an area to take care of the children of your volunteers so they can help others.

Things to think about when preparing the area for Child Care are: away from tall structures and power lines (no more than a 1-story house nearby); a fenced-in area that keeps children confined to a known area and can be secure so that the children can be checked in and out by their parent or responsible adult; an area for injured children who have been to the clinic but no longer need to be in the clinic; basic supplies for children such as blankets and small toys; plan on caring for children 10 and younger, but older children can be useful for helping out, such as clearing debris from streets to allow emergency vehicles to pass through or other light duties. Teenagers with a lot of energy can be used as runners to the fire stations.

The next speaker was Barbara Morita, who talked about her family's plan for disasters. She gave a handout (see the end of these minutes) on how she deals with the subject. She has several friends who are chosen to get the kids from school. She gives a copy of the info card to several neighbors so that at least one of them will be able to get her kids and bring them back to the neighborhood. She has a reciprocal agreement with her neighbors to get their kids, if needed. The out-of-state contact cell phone numbers are listed on the info card. The plan also contains the times and locations of the kids and the parents, including their usual routes home. All her family members carry the info card at all times. She also makes sure that the schools have the correct information, especially when phone numbers change at work, for example. Both the home and work numbers are on the cards.

Their family also has a cache of supplies, and everyone in her family knows where it is located. Make sure to keep medications in the supply cache and rotate them out when you get a new prescription. In general, the houses will likely be standing after a quake, but there will be many items in the house which will fall, and that is where the hazards are most. And don't forget your pets. Make sure each of your pets has a microchip, and put them on your info card. Have a plan for which neighbors will take care of them as well, and keep photos of your family and pets in your supply cache.

Figure out how to leave each other messages and where to leave them. The messages have to withstand any weather conditions, and they should be in a safe location. Also make sure you put the date and time of the message on each one so family members know when the messages were posted.

Also, have a secondary meeting place in mind, in case your house is not safe. Choose a nearby house of a neighbor that everyone knows to go to.