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Extension and Community Resilience: Improving Community Disaster Preparedness Using Online Resources[1]

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As Extension agents work to improve the quality of life in their communities, they must increase the capacity to respond to disasters, especially in high risk areas (which includes most of coastal Florida). Community Resiliency (CR) is a community's ability to quickly recover from adversity and it can be enhanced through planning and adaptation using easily available online resources.

Extension agents can develop programming that helps communities prepare for disasters (severe weather, sea level rise, chemical spills), external changes (economic downturns or population fluctuations), and even internal stressors (violence, social unrest). In the event of a disaster, Extension stakeholders will need services and support, but they also will play an important role in their own long-term recovery. Supplemental educational materials can help Extension stakeholders take the next step in improving long-term recovery from disasters. There are many resilience-related metrics available online which can be useful tools for Extension program development and evaluation. A companion EDIS publication (AEC507) reviews community resilience toolkits that offer step-by-step training that Extension practitioners can lead or facilitate.

This document describes supplemental educational materials that can be added to community resiliency training,

offering background information and specific tools for disaster preparation. These resources can be used individually or in combination with one another. The toolkits and resources listed here can help practitioners impact the way their communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and disruptions. These resources are useful for preparation in the event of future disasters as well as for the long-term recovery from recent disruptions.

Resource 1

RAND Corporation (2013). "Building Resilient Communities: An Online Training."

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/tools/TL100/TL109/RAND_TL109_training/training.htm

This is an online resilience training complete with an introductory video, a curriculum, and downloadable documents.

The training offers two parallel tracks, one for those who want to work on resilience from within one organization, and one for those who want to work in coalitions of several community organizations. It begins by contrasting disaster preparedness with community resilience. The major differences cited between emergency disaster preparedness and community resilience include:

- Community resilience mobilizes a wider spectrum of community agencies.
- Community resilience relies on all community assets and not just emergency responders.
- Preparedness can be for a particular emergency, while resilience is a general quality of the community that applies in all stressful situations.

The training highlights four principles of community resilience:

- Learning from past events
- Leveraging community assets
- Taking action at every level—individual to individual, organization to organization, and across the whole community
- The importance of shortening recovery time.

Resource 2

Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN)

http://eden.lsu.edu

This online network provides unique Extension educational materials and connections with practitioners in other states.

The Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) is funded by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The goal of EDEN is to mitigate the impact of disasters through education. It is a national network linking cooperative Extension around the U.S. for the purpose of sharing information about how to prepare for and recover from a variety of disasters. It offers valuable links regarding agricultural disasters (droughts, animal epidemics); the impact on families and communities (financial assistance, children's issues); hazards and threats (tornados, floods, wildfires); human health (viruses, pandemics, food recalls); and a page called Disaster Watch that includes updates on severe weather, earthquakes, and even active volcanoes. There are several online courses available on preparing for different disasters that are targeted at such audiences as farm operators, businesses, and faith-based organizations.

The resources available through EDEN include a link to join a Community of Practice made up of Extension educators who focus on a wide range of disaster types and mitigation and response techniques. They have an annual conference and links to national and state agencies and organizations.

Resource 3

National Center for Disaster Preparedness. (2013). "5 Action Steps to Preparedness." [online video]

This short video provides a concise yet informative introduction to five action steps for disaster preparedness.

The five action steps are targeted at individuals and their families and are easy to do:

- Being aware of and knowing local disaster risks and registering to receive alerts from government or media sources.
- Assuring adequate stored water and food per person for three days.
- Knowing evacuation routes and having an emergency "stay or go kit" for disaster shelter-in-place or evacuation plans.
- Communicating disaster plans with family members by having a communication plan and designated emergency contact person.
- Engaging with their community before a disaster by joining a neighborhood, civic, or regional agency that specializes in disaster preparedness, e.g., the Red Cross.

Resource 4

California Academy of Sciences. "Stock Up for Safety: Build your own quake kit.**"**

http://www.calacademy.org/academy/exhibits/earthquake/stock-up-for-safety.pdf

This pocket checklist provides a basic list of supplies needed to prepare for the loss of electricity and water.

This guide, designed for Californians facing earthquakes, provides an easy-to-use checklist that is applicable in any disaster situation where electricity and water may be limited or unavailable. Recommendations include foods with a long shelf life, tools, first-aid and hygiene supplies, and personal items. The card could be a useful handout in a disaster-preparedness workshop.

Resource 5

Access to disaster help and resources.

http://www.disasterassistance.gov/

This website provides a portal through which disaster survivors can find resources or apply for assistance following the event.

Developed by Executive Order in 2006, the Disaster Assistance Improvement Program (DAIP) provides information and resources for disaster survivors to apply for government assistance. Users of the site can apply for aid and also obtain information about evacuation, shelter, food and water, treating injuries, and locating loved ones.

Resource 6
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), assorted resources.

http://www.Ready.gov/publications

This website provides links to a variety of printable resources such as an emergency-preparedness checklist and a communication plan.

FEMA provides a number of printable emergency preparedness resources for individuals, businesses, tribes, and families that can be incorporated into workshops or distributed to communities. Resources are provided for specific target audiences such as seniors, those with disabilities, pet owners, commuters, and children.

Resource 7
The Florida Department of Health: "Emergency Preparedness and Response."

http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/emergency-preparedness-and-response/index.html

This state government website has resources, webinars, trainings, and publications that can help individuals, communities, and health care systems improve their resiliency.

The Florida Department of Health provides practitioners with information and strategies to engage local communities in resiliency efforts. The Florida Emergency Preparedness Guide helps individuals and families prepare for and recover from disasters using a preparedness checklist, a checklist of action steps to take in the event of a disaster, and a comprehensive list of "services in your community." (http://www.floridahealth.gov/preparedness-and-response/_documents/prepareguide-eng.pdf)

Archived webinars discuss topics relevant to community resilience such as planning considerations for vulnerable populations, behavioral health concerns for people with mental health and substance abuse considerations, and children's disaster preparedness considerations. Materials are provided for the Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Program that trains small teams of neighborhood volunteers to handle health needs arising after a disaster. This neighborhood-level self-sufficiency reduces the surge of demands often placed upon emergency health facilities.

Resource 8
American Psychological Association (2010). "Recovering Emotionally from Disaster."

http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx

This website includes a brief article about common emotional reactions to a disaster as well as information about building personal resiliency.

The APA website provides an article called "*Recovering Emotionally from Disaster*" that describes some of the symptoms of disaster-induced trauma, including intense and unpredictable feelings, changed patterns of thinking and behavior, and sensitivity to environmental factors (e.g., noises and smells) that re-trigger the trauma. Coping strategies for individuals are also described, such as reestablishing routines that have been disrupted. The website also contains an APA brochure on developing personal resilience with a list of strategies to enhance resilience through social connections. Practitioners may find both of these resources helpful when training and discussing individual resilience; mental health issues are one of the most overlooked of all public health needs and disasters make individuals particularly vulnerable.

Resource 9
The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series Resource Collections.

http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/dbhis-collections

This website provides professional resources, toolkits, and annotated bibliographies in the field of disaster behavioral health.

The Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC) portion of the SAMHSA website includes links to many topics for mental health professionals. Resources include archived webinars and podcasts, a SAMHSA Behavioral Health Disaster Response App, trainings, and conferences.

Organizational links and annotated bibliographies are provided for a wide range of topics for disaster responders, family and caregivers, older adults, and rural populations. The resources can provide valuable background information for practitioners to use when developing materials and workshops.

Resource 10

Information during recovery phone number: 2-1-1

An all-purpose phone number for health and human services information available nationwide.

Individuals located throughout most of the U.S. and Canada can call 2-1-1 to get connected and get answers about disaster recovery, relief, and resources. Callers can access information about basic needs (food banks, shelters) and physical and mental health resources (medical information lines, crisis intervention, and insurance programs). Additional resources include employment support and assistance for older Americans; persons with disabilities; and children, youth, and families. A map of 2-1-1 coverage (which is most of the U.S.) is accessible at http:/www.211us. org/status.htm.

Conclusion

As the frequency and costs of disasters, both natural and manmade, continue to escalate, Extension will be called on to provide expertise and up-to-date information. The websites listed here are a goldmine of information and practices that can be used to develop programs to enhance community resiliency. They can be used in conjunction with online toolkits that measure and help describe the threats that face a particular community.

Table 1. Summarizations of ten websites in terms of their focus, format, available resources, and target audience.

Resource #	Special Focus	Format	Resources	Intended Audience
1	Community Resiliency	Online training with video, curriculum, and downloadable documents	Overview of community resiliency vs emergency preparedness	Practitioners
2	Disaster Education	Online network; some courses available	Provides central source for links to websites and resources	Practitioners
3	Disaster Preparedness	Online video	Identifies five action steps	General
4	Disaster Preparedness	Checklist	Provides list of foods and personal products needed	General
5	Disaster Assistance	Website	Portal to apply for financial assistance and resources	General
6	Disaster Preparedness	Online and printed resources	Emergency plan, emergency checklist	General
7	Community Resiliency	Website, publications, webcasts, training program	Assisting individuals, communities, and health departments in becoming more resilient	Health Practitioners, Communities, Individuals
8	Disaster Recovery	Article	Provides information on coping strategies for individuals and a link to information on individual resiliency	Individuals
9	Disaster Behavioral Health	Website	Provides articles and resources on resilience, stress management, and recovery	Practitioners; Mental Health Practitioners
10	Disaster Assistance	Emergency phone number	Provides information on disaster recovery, relief, and resources	General