

## Readying for disaster

*Neighborhoods take planning into their own hands*

BY KARA HANSEN MURPHEY

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### **Residents of the Palisades neighborhood have taken disaster planning into their own hands.**

Using a \$2,445 grant from the city, the neighborhood has purchased 24 sets of two-way radios for emergency communications after a major disaster, as well as an initial round of 50 72-hour supply packs, with plans to sell the bags at cost — for roughly \$30 — and buy more when supplies run low.

“We’re not just buying backpacks and giving them to residents,” said Palisades resident Rick Eilers, who’s heading up the neighborhood’s emergency preparation efforts. He applied for the grant with neighborhood association chairwoman Gail Parrick. “The idea was that if we gave backpacks away to citizens, we’d give away 50. But we probably have 4,000 people in our association. This seemed like the best scenario: We can keep buying them and replacing them.”

The neighborhood also bought 50 natural gas shut-off wrenches to hand out, and Northwest Natural donated another 100 in support of the cause.

Put in the hands of residents in different sections of the neighborhood, the new radios could play a crucial role in buoying the neighborhood after an earthquake or other disaster. The devices will enable Palisades to keep an open line of communication with the local fire stations if electricity and cellphone services are knocked out.

“The first priority is yourself and your family; make sure your family is taken care of,” Eilers said. “Then you can go check on your neighbors. If you’ve got an emergency, someone who’s injured, you can get on the radio and contact someone for help.”

With a radio every three or four blocks, Eilers and other neighborhood representatives believe they have coverage from South Shore Boulevard to Lakeridge High School.

“It’s just the right thing to do,” Eilers said of Palisades’ work to help neighbors prepare. “It feels right.”

They’re not alone.

Lake Oswego Assistant Fire Chief Larry Goff said Waluga residents have been working on a “map your neighborhood” initiative, putting coordinators in place and documenting vulnerable populations as well as those who might have special skills to help during a crisis. Waluga neighborhood leaders also received a city grant of \$2,500 to pay for supplies and training.

“We’re very proud of our day-to-day response ... but in a disaster, we know we’re going to be overwhelmed and we’re not going to be there for everyone like we are day to day,” Goff said. “We encourage community and individual preparedness for those disaster situations.”

Highly visible, tragic natural disasters, such as the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, often ignite interest in emergency preparation, Goff said. But the interest has stayed high in Lake Oswego long after



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The Palisades Neighborhood Association is selling its residents a 72-hour emergency backpack kit filled with supplies like these, including waterproof matches and water with a five-year shelf life. Palisades had been gearing up for a major disaster for years, but recent crises here and abroad accelerated efforts to prepare.

that quake. Many residents have taken the city's Community Emergency Response Team training.

The Waluga and Palisades neighborhoods appear to be the first to "go beyond," Goff said.

Frédérique Lavios of Palisades said she became involved in disaster planning after the big snowstorm in Oregon a couple winters back.

"Our cars are outfitted with chains and snow tires, so we could get around," she said of her family. "We're also able-bodied. But we have a lot of elderly citizens in our section of town who don't have cars equipped to get around. ... I saw huge tree limbs on the ground, things that for some people could be a problem, and I thought, 'If it's any worse than this, our neighborhood is going to have a real problem.'"

Once she began planning, putting together supplies wasn't too difficult. She said, "It took relatively little time and money and space in my house to be prepared."

Lavios even hosted a Shelf Reliance party. Shelf Reliance is a company that offers freeze-dried and dehydrated foods, emergency kits and other supplies. A consultant even brought samples of food to the party.

"I wanted to give neighbors a chance to learn more about what they can do for themselves," Lavios said.

The food, she added, tasted fresh — different than a lot of the preserved meals sold to backpackers and campers — and the packages don't take up much space on her shelves.

"It was amazing," Lavios said. "My teenage daughter wanted to take some for everyday eating. ... They claim it has more nutrients than frozen or canned foods."

She said it won't go to waste, regardless of what happens in the future. "I'm going to use all of this stuff eventually."

The biggest obstacle to getting neighbors on board has been getting the word out, she said.

Palisades residents have tried going door to door to raise awareness of their efforts and are hoping to do that more, but it's really time-intensive, and they're all volunteers. Lavios, a professional website designer, also built the neighborhood a new website for free.

"Emails and the website seem to be the most efficient, least expensive way to get the word out to neighbors," she said, noting that so far, neighbors have been pretty receptive. "This isn't a scare tactic. It's just to bring awareness; let's work together."

For information on Palisades' efforts, go to [palisadesneighborhood.org](http://palisadesneighborhood.org). The Waluga neighborhood's website is at [waluganeighborhoodassociation.com](http://waluganeighborhoodassociation.com).

### **Earthquake experts to speak at city hall in May**

The city of Lake Oswego will host a presentation featuring earthquake expert James Roddey, also known as the "Prophet of Doom," and local hazard mitigation expert Jay Wilson.

Topics covered at the event will include:

- Natural hazards that Oregon faces and why it's important to be prepared;
- The relevance of earthquakes around the Pacific Rim to Oregon;
- Learning opportunities from disasters elsewhere in the world; and
- How to start putting together an emergency plan for your family.

Two other offerings are called "Think you're prepared? Think again!" and "What happens when the white hats don't come to the rescue."

The event will take place from 6:30 to 8 p.m. May 16 at city hall, 380 A Ave. It's free, but registration is encouraged. To register, call the city's main fire station at 503-635-0275 or email [kcarnahan@ci.oswego.or.us](mailto:kcarnahan@ci.oswego.or.us).

For more information about preparing for disasters, visit [ci.oswego.or.us/EmergencyManagement](http://ci.oswego.or.us/EmergencyManagement).

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