

There are many ways we can protect our homeowner association communities and individual homes prior to a disaster occurring. While there are different types of disasters depending on where you live, California is mostly prone to earthquakes, floods and fires. It is important for communities to have a before, during and after emergency plan.

Savvy managers and homeowners look to long term safety plans for their community and their residents well before a disaster strikes. Communities and residents should know what steps to take when preparing for a disaster. Earthquakes usually come with no warning. Floods and fires are a little more predictable, giving residents and managers more of a warning before disaster strikes.

There are many agencies that can help along the way when preparing a disaster plan. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is one of the largest and well known of these agencies. FEMA can assist you with putting a disaster plan in place and ultimately help to protect homes and communities. The organization works with communities across the nation to

help homeowners not only to develop new plans and put them into practice but also to respond when disasters have struck in a community. They also work to support citizens and first responders – helping to protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate the damages.

How else can FEMA help?

FEMA offers programs like the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). This program promotes disaster preparedness education and informs community members about disasters that may impact the area. This may include earthquake, fire and flood education, among others. The CERT program trains participants in the event of a basic disaster, giving them the knowledge to assist with fire safety management and light search and rescue organization. With these skills a layperson would be able to assist neighbors and others in the event of a disaster.

The following are three of the most important things to consider when planning for an emergency:

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

How will your HOA communicate when disaster strikes? A plan should consist of where to meet and how to reach residents who are unable to make it to the designated meeting spot. Before an emergency situation, homeowners should choose a friend or out-of-state family member to reach in the event of an emergency and create contact cards for each family member. The FEMA website many other helpful ideas to ensure your plan is well laid out and effective.

EASY-TO-ACCESS DISASTER KIT

One of the most important things homeowners will need for their disaster plan is to have a disaster kit. The kit should be in one container so it is accessible and easy to grab. The kit should contain an array of items from basic items such as water, food (non-perishable), medications, flashlights, radios, blankets, cash, matches, candles and any other items they think they will need in an emergency. They should keep their list to a reasonable amount.

Remember: Homeowners don't have enough space to pack the whole house. A Kit should provide enough provisions for at least 72 hours. Since they may not be at home when a disaster occurs, it would be helpful to have a few different kits prepared. Possible locations of these kits include your work office, home or vehicle.

KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL SHELTERS

Homeowners should also consider various other items when setting their plan. Do some of your family members require special attention? Do they have pets? If they have pets, they should make a kit for the pet – they need to survive too. Some shelters do not take animals; therefore they should plan ahead and locate a shelter that is pet friendly. They should know their options before disaster strikes.

Association managers should have a similar plan for their homeowners. How will buildings be evacuated? A plan should be set in place beforehand to ensure that homeowners and tenants are educated or informed about evacuation routes and procedures.

What if an earthquake strikes?

These same homeowners should know where to remain in a building if a disastrous event such as an earthquake occurs. Local fire and police departments, as well as the Red Cross all offer resources that aid in putting together a personal emergency preparedness program. Property managers should have listings


of insurance agents and other local agencies in an easy-to-access location.

All residents should be given pertinent emergency preparedness information upon move-in. Association managers will also want to update residents in writing, on an as-needed basis, when information changes. It may also be worth re-distributing this information annually to ensure it doesn't get lost in the shuffle as time goes on.

While we never know when a disaster will strike, being prepared is a key component to making things less stressful in the event of a disaster. For more information, visit www.fema.gov

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CONSTRUCTION DEFECT LITIGATION

OUR CLIENTS:

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- High/Mid Rise Condominiums
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- Commercial Property Owners
- Business Litigation
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**IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING,
DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US:**

- Stained drywall at window sills and ceilings
- Fractures or cracks along private streets, common area slabs or pavers
- Frequent and excessive cracks at dry wall (interior) or stucco (exterior)
- Leaks or staining at or around common area planters
- Staining or discoloration below decks and at entry landings
- Excessive cracking at tile flooring, garage slabs or patio areas
- Staining or dampness at underground parking garage
- Cracking or step cracking at perimeter block wall

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