

Southern Marin NRG

SEMI-ANNUAL DRILL GUIDEBOOK

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southernmarinnrg.org

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



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Southern Marin Fire District

What is the drill?



Twice each year on the day of the daylight savings time change (once in the Spring and once in the Autumn), Neighborhood Response Groups across Marin County take part in a semi-annual OK/HELP drill. This exercise helps communities practice how their neighborhood would react after a disaster.

During this simple drill, residents post a "**HELP**" or "**OK**" sign in their home in a location visible from the street or public space.



Neighborhood Response Group Block Captains walk their street or floor of their apartment building, keeping track of which households displayed their signs.

Some communities conduct sophisticated exercises, complete with simulated injuries, and practice two-way radio communication, while others use the opportunity to gather with their fellow Block Captains, walk their street, and engage with neighbors. If you've already collected your neighbors' contact info with the [Resident Information Form](#), send out a reminder to participate in the next drill.



If you don't have an OK/HELP sign already, you can download and print one [here](#). For the Block Captains out there wondering how to participate this year, continue reading for ideas on how your Neighborhood Response Group can get involved. If you're still looking for a co-captain or haven't quite started, you can still print the sign and practice. Building muscle memory now can help if you respond to a real life disaster in the future.

Print the [Participation Form](#) on the next two pages to help you keep track of participation and report to the [Southern Marin NRG Coordinator](#) how your neighborhood did. Don't forget to send photos!

Southern Marin NRG



OK / HELP DRILL PARTICIPATION FORM

Block Captain Name: _____ Date: _____

NRG Name (Ex: Treeland, Cascade, etc.): _____

Please write the address of each home in your block, and indicate whether the HELP or OK sign was displayed. At the end of the drill, please keep your report for your records and to respond to the post-drill survey or email this form to nrg@smfd.org.

	ADDRESS	HELP	OK
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			

	ADDRESS	HELP	OK
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			
29			
30			

Comments:

How can you get involved?

Just getting started

Maybe you just started your Neighborhood Response Group this year or you're regrouping after a break, this drill is a great opportunity to set aside time to connect with your fellow Block Captains and neighbors.

- Reach out to the Block Captains in your neighborhood and decide on a place to meet on your street at 10am on the day of the daylight savings time change. If this day and time doesn't work for you, find one that does.
- Gather & share updates with each other, then walk the block to hand out OK/HELP signs or other emergency prep resources to your neighbors.
- Haven't had a chance to collect your neighbors' contact info? Introduce yourself and ask neighbors to fill out the [Resident Info Form](#).



Download signs here!

Organized, but looking for next steps

Let's say your neighborhood is well organized, maybe you even practiced the drill at the last time change, but you're not ready to make it complicated. That's ok!

- Remind your neighbors the drill will be happening. (Remember that email roster you created?)
- Walk the street, write down which addresses participated, and hand out new resources.
- Make a note of things that have changed in your neighborhood: property access, new neighbors, etc.
- Take out your two-way radios and practice the basics as a group. Start with simple functions on the radio: on/off, talking clearly on the radio, and taking turns.



Ready for a challenge

You know your block like the back of your hand. Your neighbors have their signs, Block Captains bought two-way radios, and you're ready for a challenge. Below are a few ideas you can practice with your fellow Block Captains and neighbors.

- Practice proper radio protocol with your co-captain or a helpful neighbor. Remember, you might use this in a real emergency.
- Make note of or map areas with poor reception to watch out for in emergencies. Don't be afraid to move to an area with better reception, even a couple feet.
- Create an emergency scenario and respond by radio. *"This is a **DRILL**. We have a partially collapsed carport at [address]. There was a gas leak, and we've turned off the gas valve. The family is fine. This is a **DRILL**."*

How would you respond?

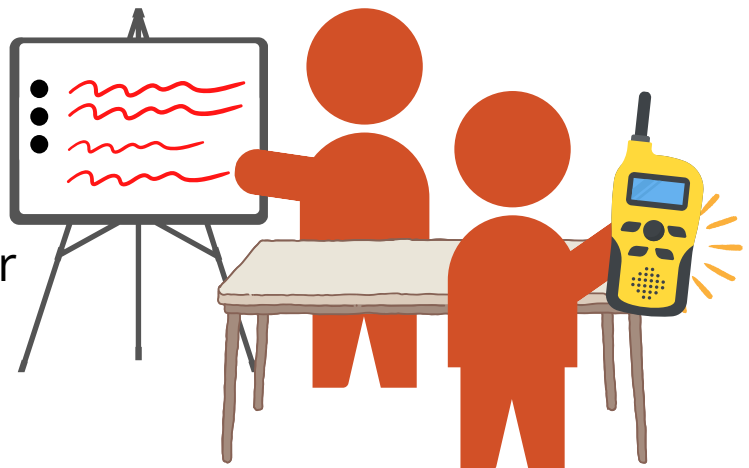


Command Posts

If you're starting your Neighborhood Response Group from scratch, you probably won't have an established Command Post. These locations are set up in partnership with the Southern Marin NRG Coordinator to serve, primarily, as a centralized communication post. A radio, card table, and limited office supplies are enough to get you started. **It's important that Block Captain(s) in your NRG "staff" these locations** to ensure local knowledge and speedier setup.

What is a Neighborhood Command Post?

- Centralized location for multiple NRG Block Captains to report into by radio (on their designated channel) or in-person
- Record incidents that need to be escalated to emergency services & help crowdsource internal support (ex: neighbor with first aid training)
- Place for CERT and NRG volunteers to work together in drills and emergencies ([see page 17](#) for example)



Radio Basics

Below are tips and basic guidelines for using two-way radios. Take a moment to collect your thoughts and calm yourself before sending a message. Waiting a moment to send a clear message is better than sending a poorly formed message quickly.

Get ready to send your message

- Face toward the direction of the person you're calling. Your body, buildings, and terrain can block the signal.
- Hold radio vertical and talk across, not into the mic.
- Use clear, plain language and a normal tone. Shouting into the mic distorts the signal.
- Walkie-talkies are not like a phone. You cannot hear others when you are sending, and vice versa.



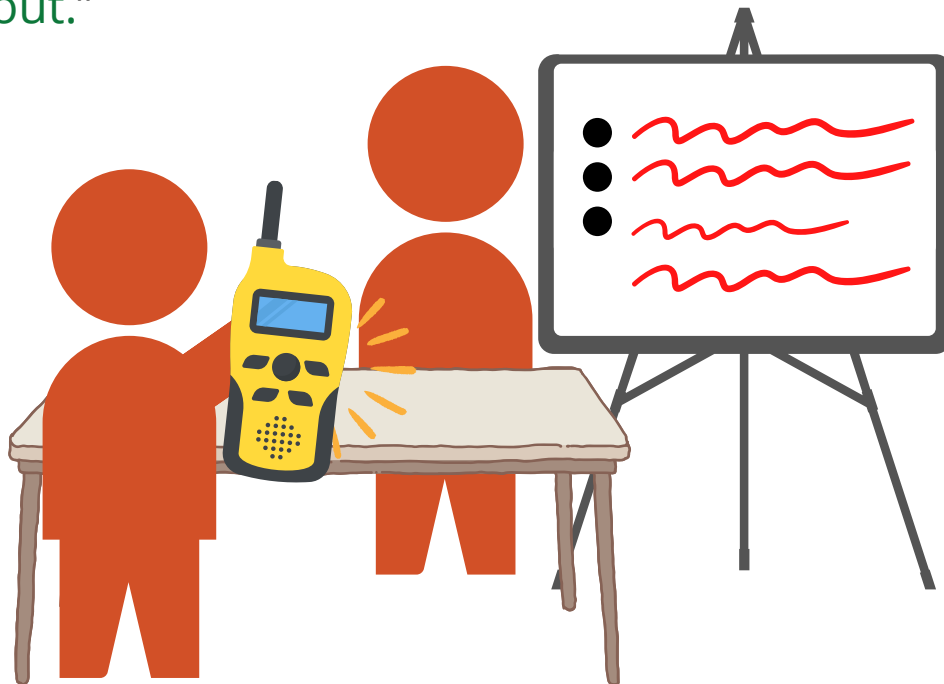
Sending a message

Form a clear, short message in your mind **before** hitting any buttons.

- Push transmit button, count **one second** and then begin talking.
- State the name or unit you are trying to reach, your team name, then "Over".
- Count **one second** and release the transmit button.
- Keep calm, wait to be recognized.
- Only after you are recognized should you send your message.
- This initial back and forth should sound something like this:
 - "Command Post, this is Cascade 9, over."
 - "Cascade 9, this is Command, go ahead, over."
 - **Now** you can send your message.
Ex: "A resident at 1 Main Street has a broken arm. Can you send someone to perform first aid? Over."

Ending Transmission

- Say name of person/unit you are communicating with.
- Confirm you understand information transmitted.
- Give your team ID.
- Say "Clear" or "Out" (these terms are interchangeable and used to **end** the conversation).
- Example:
 - Command speaking to you: "Cascade 9, we're sending first aid to 1 Main Street. Stay with resident until they arrive, over."
 - "Command, message is understood. Cascade 9, out."



Tips & Troubleshooting

- If your Neighborhood Command Post is not responding, wait and listen for any other radio traffic. They may be dealing with multiple calls.
- Make sure you are on agreed-upon channel.
- Check for low, improperly installed, or dead batteries and make sure volume is turned up.
- If reception or transmission is scratchy or garbled, try moving your location, even just a few feet.
- **Do not** turn off the radio or turn the volume down while out in the field. If it's distracting while dealing with a situation, hand the radio to another team member to monitor. If it's essential to be off-radio, inform Command before switching off and when you switch back on. Otherwise, they'll think you need help.
- If you have an **emergency** that is clearly more important than the call in progress, you may interrupt with the words "break-break" or "emergency". The Command Post will reply "Breaker, go ahead" and you can deliver your message.

Radio Channels

Now that you know how the basics of how to use your radio, make sure it's on the right channel for your Neighborhood Response Group. All Block Captains in your wider NRG will utilize this channel, so be sure to practice proper etiquette and actively listen.

Southern Marin NRG Channels

Neighborhood Response Group	Channel
Almonte	17
Alto-Sutton/Scott Valley	5
Cascade/Summit	2
Edgewood	16
Hillside/Warner Canyon	19
Homestead	21
Strawberry	22
Shelter Ridge/Enchanted Knolls	7
Sycamore	18
West Blithedale	4

Neighborhood Response Group

Channel

Sausalito*

* Radio mapping for Sausalito is ongoing. Channel(s) will be assigned based on reception that does not overlap with surrounding areas.

Tam Valley NRG Network

Channel

Birdland / Kay Park

15

Erica / Chamberlain

9

Green Glen

7

Loring / West California

18

Marin Drive

4

Marin View

2

Morning Sun

12

Northern / Eastwood

5

Pine Crest

22

Pine Hill East

6

Pine Hill West

19

Tam Junction

16

Tennessee Valley

14

Treeland

21

Tam Valley NRG Network

Channel

Waterview

20

Command Post

16

* Radio mapping for Sausalito is ongoing. Channel(s) will be assigned based on reception that does not overlap with surrounding areas.

Southern Marin CERT Channels*

Purpose

Channel

Primary**

1

Reserved***

2

Tactical Channel****

3

Tactical Channel****

4

* The Southern Marin CERT channels are only accessible through highband radios distributed to trained CERT volunteers. They do not overlap with NRG channels and are not accessible from the standard GMRS radios.

** Channel 1 is the primary channel all highband CERT radios in Southern Marin should monitor at all times during drills and disasters.

*** Channel 2 is reserved for Net Control to communicate with emergency personnel, if and when appropriate.

**** Channels 3 & 4 are tactical channels to be used "in the field." While on channel 1 (primary), CERTs can **request** permission from Net Control to switch to channel 3 or 4 to speak directly with another CERT in the field.

Why do we use radios?

The last few pages may seem like a lot to take in, and that's ok. It takes practice to get used to new tools.

One of the main benefits of two-way radios in Neighborhood Response Groups is internal communication. Even if your group is not set up, yet, with a Command Post, you can more quickly communicate with your fellow Block Captains and relay important information.

Once you have a Neighborhood Command Post set up, it will be a centralized point Block Captains around the area can radio important incident details to in a real disaster.

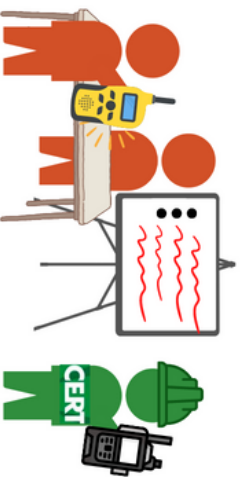
Always try 9-1-1 in a **real** emergency. If 9-1-1 is down in a disaster, your Command post can collect important incident details in one centralized place. This will save First Responders time if and when they can respond.

The [flow chart](#) on the next page shows multiple ways Block Captains can communicate in disasters, both with and without radios. CERT volunteers, if available locally, can also take part in forwarding messages.

Neighborhood Communications in Disasters



Block Captains gather incident info from their block & deliver updates to Neighborhood Command Post

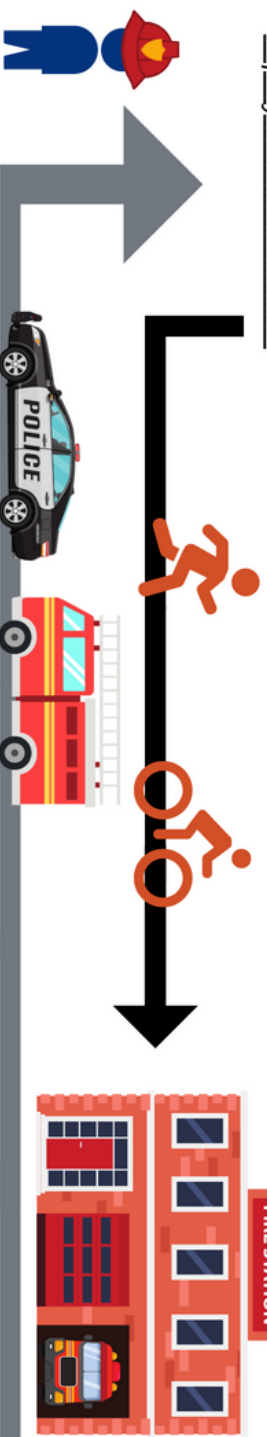


Block Captains gather incident info from their block & **radio** updates to Neighborhood Command Post

Neighborhood Command Post

Block Captains record incidents. They can wait for first responders or attempt to deliver critical info to nearest station, if safe to do so. First responders may be deployed & unavailable.

CERT, if on scene, can radio incidents to volunteer staffed Net Control to communicate directly to Emergency Operation Center (EOC).



When able, first responders verify incident on scene & communicate to Emergency Operations Center



Evacuation

How can you
participate?



Evacuation: How can you participate?

OK/HELP Drills are a great way to practice what you would do in a shelter-in-place scenario. Many Block Captains also ask how they can participate in **evacuation** drills.

Driveway Drills

Driveway drills are one way to practice evacuation. Our role as individuals in an **evacuation order** is to leave our homes quickly and safely evacuate by car. Many people find it takes longer than expected, they brought things they didn't need, or forgot important items.

- Use your email, text roster, and/or fliers to notify your neighbors of the drill and encourage participation.
- Ask participants to time themselves and report back to you what they learned and how long it took them to evacuate.
- Each household can set an alarm at the designated time and practice responding to an evacuation order.
- Each participant should grab their [Go Bag](#) and pets (or pet carrier), and make their way to their car.
- Once in the car, the Driveway Drill is complete!



Not quite ready?

The important thing to remember is to take it in stages. This might be the first time you've heard about Neighborhood Response Groups. To find out if a group already exists in your area or more about how to start a group, you can reach out to the Southern Marin NRG Coordinator, Leah Curtis, at nrg@smfd.org.

Once you're connected, you'll receive regular communication about events and training opportunities, like hands-only CPR, webinars, and more.

Scan this QR code with the camera on your smartphone to save the NRG Coordinator's contact info to your phone.

Thank you for taking a step to better prepare for emergencies and disasters in our community.

Stay in touch!

