

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ANNEX

Introduction

The safety and security of our community members and visitors to Larimer County is a priority. Emergency preparedness is part of this effort. Larimer County works with local, regional, state and federal agencies to prevent, protect against, mitigate for, respond to, and recover from incidents to minimize the impact on life, property, and the economy.

Purpose

The purpose of this annex is to outline public awareness and education programs available to community members and visitors of Larimer County to assist in preparing them and ultimately empowering them to take action in the face of emergencies and disasters that occur throughout the county.

Public Awareness and Education Authority

The authority for preparedness activities involving the public is granted by the Board of Commissioners within their responsibilities as outlined in the Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 24, Article 33.5, Colorado Disaster Emergency Act, as amended June 2012.

Assignment of Responsibilities

Community members and visitors to Larimer County are ultimately responsible for their own safety and well-being. Each should have an emergency plan based upon individual and family needs and should be aware of the hazards within their area.

The Larimer County Office of Emergency Management has primary responsibility for executing the provisions of the CEMP and for providing adequate preparedness information and programs to the public for emergencies and disasters within the county. The role of Larimer County Office of Emergency Management is to also collaborate with partners regarding local preparedness education programs, and to identify and minimize barriers to accessing this type of education, therefore empowering community members and visitors to Larimer County to take personal responsibility.

Preparedness and Education Materials

It is important to take into consideration the fact that not all community members learn and/or access information in the same way. Therefore, Larimer County Emergency Management seeks to shape its preparedness program around a multi-modal approach to education. Larimer OEM provides printed materials, attends community outreach events and expos, hosts in-person educational seminars and classes, and provides information electronically and online.

Additionally, part of empowering community members to take personal responsibility for their preparedness planning is having an understanding of systemic barriers that exist in the community that contribute to social vulnerability. All community members are inherently resilient and have the capability to develop and act upon personal disaster/emergency plans, however it is important for Larimer OEM to identify where barriers caused by the system in which

we live may inhibit one's ability to access resources to strengthen personal plans. This is why Larimer OEM seeks to identify ways in which to provide information and resources in multiple languages, develop better cultural understanding to help inform public education initiatives and make them more inclusive and accessible, and to work with trusted community partners that help support these efforts.

As a foundational resource for the public, Larimer County has developed a Community Preparedness Guide available in hardcopy or online for community members and visitors to assist in educating them on the hazards that exist throughout the county. The guide outlines various education related to both human-caused and weather-related hazards and recommended actions by the community to ensure individual safety. Additionally, the guide provides information about managing emergencies and disasters with pets, emergency planning for home emergencies, planning for people with access or functional needs, and planning considerations for children. This resource is currently available in both English and Spanish.

Many valuable resources are available online for community members and visitors to Larimer County. The following websites provide valuable preparedness information and resources to decrease risk and improve overall safety. A few of these programs relevant to Colorado include:

- NoCo Alert – The Larimer Emergency Telephone Authority, or LETA, is the 911 communications telephone authority in Larimer County. They have a program known as “NoCo Alert” that allows community members to register phone numbers to obtain emergency alerts and warnings. Many programs only allow for notifications to landline phones, but through NoCo Alert, citizens can register cellular phones as well so that they can get notifications even if they are away from home. www.nocoalert.org
- Larimer.org/Emergency – The Larimer County Emergency Management website provides information about a variety of programs throughout the county, along with hazards and actions. For ongoing incidents, a website has been set up for notifications about emergencies throughout Larimer County. This is also a subscription service, where citizens can register for specific types of alerts. This can be accessed at <https://www.larimer.org/emergency/emergency-information>. Additionally, if an event is deemed large enough, and it is expected that that website will garner a lot of traffic from the public and/or need its own area for a multitude of resources specific to the at incident, a separate webpage will be stood up, with a banner directing traffic to that page on the main Larimer County homepage. www.larimer.org/emergency
- READYColorado - READYColorado is Colorado's official source for homeland security and all-hazards preparedness information. This campaign is supported by numerous public and private partners. With READYColorado, community members can discover the risks in their specific area, and the steps they can take to help themselves or their family face the challenges presented. www.readycolorado.com

Awareness and Education Programs

In addition to the key materials that exist to help prepare community members and visitors, several programs exist to educate community members about how to reduce their overall risk and empower them to increase their own level of personal and community resilience. A few of these programs include:

- Larimer Connects – Larimer County received funding in 2016 to develop the Larimer Connects program to increase the level of OEM public outreach and education. The core goal of the Larimer Connects program is to develop resilient and self-sustainable communities county-wide. Larimer Connects works in a bottom-up approach, allowing the community to define their needs, strengths, and gaps as it pertains to preparedness and resilience, with the program itself serving the role of providing technical advice, training, connection to resources, and guidance to develop skills, knowledge, and empower local citizens to take ownership of the future resilience of their communities and/or neighborhoods.
- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training – Larimer County Emergency Management is able to partner with the region and the state to provide national preparedness courses for community members and visitors such as the CERT Program. This course provides hands-on skills training in emergency medical care, firefighting, and search and rescue. Additionally, the course can be tailored to the specific area to include information about terrorism, disaster psychology, evacuation planning, etc. Courses are available by request through the Larimer County Office of Emergency Management.
- FIREWISE - During the last few years, with the number and intensity of wildfires increasing in many parts of Colorado, it is more important than ever to begin working on ways to reduce the risk of damage and injuries from these fires. The Firewise Program through the National Fire Protection Association, teaches communities about wildfire mitigation and allows for positive action to decrease the risk of wildfire in the future. www.firewise.org
- FEMA Courses for the Public – The Federal Emergency Management Agency has a comprehensive list of online training courses for citizens, emergency responders and emergency management personnel. These courses cover a wide range of subjects and interest areas. www.training.fema.gov/is