



Hilshire Village Community Emergency Response Team (HVCERT)

Neighbors Helping Neighbors in Times of Need

Summary

The Hilshire Village Community Emergency Response Team (HVCERT) was established by Hilshire Village City Council in September 2018 to aid Hilshire Village residents in helping their neighbors during an emergency event. The effort is intended to assist residents, and as needed, the City, Village Fire Department, and Spring Valley Police Department during a significant event, but not replace professional providers of municipal services. This is a citizen-based volunteer effort to enable neighbors helping neighbors with a swift and significant manpower response when traditional government and commercial services may be limited. The team will plan, coordinate, organize, train, establish communication processes, and mobilize citizen resources and capabilities where and when needed to provide for the safety of citizens and mitigation of minor property damage.

Call to Action

If you are willing to help your neighbors during an emergency event please provide your contact information and get involved in preparing our community to respond in force to the next emergency.

Please contact Cassie Stephens at cassie.stephens@hilshirevillagetexas.com if you would like to help or learn more.

WHO, WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE?

Who

We are citizens of the City of Hilshire Village who are willing and able to help our neighbors during an emergency event.

What

Our purpose is to provide relief and aid to citizens, our city government, and our first responders by planning, preparing and mobilizing our citizens during an emergency event.

When

We are called to action during emergency events, such as tornado, hurricane, ice-storm, and other acts of force majeure and man when our public resources are stretched thin or where access or communication to first responders is limited.

Where

Within the boundaries of the City of Hilshire Village and neighboring areas.

Why

As residents we are able to be first on the scene and react immediately to events that occur, provide resources for safety and mitigate minor property damage of our neighbors. Additionally, we can provide direct public support on private property when requested by the owner, which may be prohibited by law for a government entity to perform.

Historical Context

Hilshire residents aided in clearing roadways, driveways, structures, cars, and drainage ditches from trees, limbs, and other related debris in the hours after hurricane Ike passed over the City of Hilshire. A similar event occurred in 2002 when a bow echo produced 100 mph straight line winds shutting down Wirt Road and causing debris damage throughout Hilshire. We saw the finest examples of neighbors helping neighbors in Houston and surrounding areas during and in the months following hurricane Harvey. To build upon the lessons learned we are organizing and planning in advance for the next unknown event to maximize our combined effort as a community.

Why now

The date of the next disaster is not known, and the 2019 hurricane season is just around the corner (June 1 through November 30th). We need to be preparing now to be able to fully respond in force to the needs of our neighbors when the next disaster occurs.

How

We are organizing, planning, and coordinating in advance of the next event to identify resources, including citizen skills and equipment, establishing communication and response protocols for swift response to our neighbor's needs in a collaborative effort with designated first responders.

What can you do to help?

Our first need is to identify people that are willing and capable of aiding in different types of emergency scenarios. While core responders with particular skills, ability, and equipment are needed, all citizens can help with this combined effort of neighbors helping neighbors.

What's an example of emergency scenario?

Each emergency scenario is different, but one common aftereffect we can anticipate is wide spread tree damage. Hurricanes, tornados, and ice storms cause debris which need to be cleared out of roadways for emergency vehicle and community access. Other examples of anticipated needs include freeing trapped people or vehicles and mitigating minor property damage such as installation of tarps on homes with roof damage. Accordingly, we need people with the ability to safely operate a chainsaw, 4x4 vehicles and winches, and climb tall ladders. Additionally, we will need general labor such as 15-18-year-old young adults to help carry limbs and debris.

How will this work in practice?

When an event such as a hurricane is anticipated we will ramp up the communication and planning process, review safety items such as chainsaw operation, and ensure equipment is in proper working order and that supplies are on hand. We learned during hurricane Ike that many chainsaws were inoperable because they wouldn't start, had old or dull blades, or no oil or gas. Similarly, we learned during hurricane Harvey that many residents wanted to help, but didn't know how. After a hurricane event, when it is safe, we will begin asking citizens to patrol the city in order to triage and prioritize the need for assistance and launch into action, communicating through cell phones or by radio if cell service is down.

The Village Fire and Police Department are the City's first responders and our efforts are intended only to aid them in their primary responsibility of public safety.

How much will this cost our taxpayers?

This is an entirely community-based volunteer effort where volunteers will provide and contribute their equipment and supplies and storage space of needed materials. Monetary contributions to the effort or taxpayer dollars are not requested, anticipated, or desired. The City's role is to help coordinate with and aid in HVCERT communications, education materials and planning. The City will also provide vest or some type of logo wear to identify volunteers

Cassie Stephens, City Secretary