

## Are you “Ready in Renton”?



*By Renton City Council President Marcie Palmer*

Our region has had its share of disasters from the 2001 Nisqually earthquake to the 2006 windstorm. These events made us realize that at any moment our lives can be turned upside down. Our children and families may not be able to return home, our pets could need attention, and our senior neighbors might need help. If we can be personally prepared for a disaster not only can we take care of our families and others who depend on us, we can also help free up emergency responders to assist those who may not be able to help themselves.

In 2006, when the City offered the first CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training, I joined the class along with 15 of my neighbors. The class taught us how to be prepared and to take care of those in need. The most exciting part was the finale—our “final” test. We responded to a mock disaster complete with “victims” needing medical attention. Even though we all knew it was make-believe, I still remember the adrenaline rush. After successfully accomplishing our goal we all felt much better prepared to respond in a true emergency. Two new CERT classes are starting soon. Call Renton’s Fire and Emergency Services at 425-430-7000 for more information or to sign up.

Being prepared for an emergency is actually very easy—just make a plan, build a kit and get involved. An emergency plan can be as simple as talking to your household members about what you will do in an emergency and designating a person out of your local dialing area to use as a message board. Long distance circuits are often still working even when local phone switches are not. Be sure to update contact information every year.

Putting together a kit with a few basic survival and comfort supplies need not be expensive. Most things that go into a disaster kit are probably already somewhere within the average household. My family’s emergency kit contains canned food, blankets, pet food, tools, flashlights, batteries, first aid items, clothes and daily essentials like toilet paper and soap. I put this all together into a recycled school backpack. I also carry an

emergency bag in my car for myself and my sons, including clothes, shoes, crayons (moms know these things!), toiletries, etc.

This year for the City's "Ready in Renton" campaign local stores are teaming up with the City of Renton to help residents get prepared. Big 5 Sporting Goods, Fred Meyer, Lowes, McLendon Hardware, Target, and WalMart will be stocking many of the items required for personal disaster preparedness kits and providing lists of necessary emergency items prepared by the City's Office of Emergency Management.

There are many ways to get involved. Learn about volunteer opportunities at Renton's Disaster "Job" Fair at Renton City Hall, September 25, 3:00 to 8:00 p.m.; attend a training class at Renton's Emergency Preparedness Academy; and participate in "Map Your Neighborhood", to help you determine the special needs and emergency resources in your neighborhood.

Getting ready shouldn't be overwhelming. Simple steps can make a huge difference in how we deal with a disaster. Picture your family at any given moment, where each could potentially be, and how you would be able to cope on your own in a major earthquake, storm, flood, or man-made disaster. Are YOU ready? If not, we can help – check our website at [rentonwa.gov](http://rentonwa.gov) and look for Ready in Renton.