



WPV-READY

Guide to Organizing Ready Communities

Woodside • Portola Valley • Unincorporated San Mateo County

If you only do one thing:

Establish a WPV-Ready Node in your neighborhood.

A Ready Node gives your neighborhood a place to turn when everything else fails.

A program of WPV-Ready under EPiC, Inc.

Supported by the Town of Woodside, the Town of Portola Valley, and the Woodside Fire Protection District

Table of Contents

What Is in This Guide?	3
The Goal: A WPV-Ready Node in Every Neighborhood	4
How Ready Nodes Work	5
How to Establish Your Node	8
Building the Foundation: Your Ready Community	10
Ready Communicators and ReadyNet	11
Resources	12
Projects and Activities	13
In Conclusion – Let's Get Started!	14
Terms We Use	15
Sample Introduction Letter	16

What Is in This Guide?

This guide is for residents of Woodside, Portola Valley, and surrounding unincorporated San Mateo County who want to help their neighborhood be better prepared for emergencies. It is produced by WPV-Ready, the Emergency Preparedness program of the Woodside Fire Protection District (WFPD).

The central goal of this guide is simple:

Help you establish a WPV-Ready Node in your neighborhood.

Everything else in this guide supports that goal.

A Ready Node is a neighborhood post that activates after a major disaster — when internet, cell phones, and 911 may be down or overwhelmed. It connects neighbors with each other: sharing information, skills, and supplies without depending on any technology that may have failed.

This guide also covers:

- How to build a Ready Community — the organized neighborhood foundation your Node depends on
- WPV-Ready Communicators — trained radio volunteers who link your Node to CERT and WFPD when normal communications fail
- Resources, activities, and sample materials to help you get started

WPV-Ready is funded and supported by the Town of Woodside, the Town of Portola Valley, the WFPD, and various grants and donations. Our service area covers the Towns of Woodside and Portola Valley, plus the unincorporated areas of Vista Verde, Los Trancos Woods, Skyline, Ladera, and Emerald Hills.

Learn more at: <http://WPV-Ready.org>

The Goal: A WPV-Ready Node in Every Neighborhood

The uncomfortable reality is that the systems that support modern life can go down at any time: internet, cell phones, electricity, gas, water, supply chains, and 911. When those systems fail, your neighborhood is largely on its own — at least for the first hours or days.

The good news is that everything most people need during that window already exists nearby. In Woodside and Portola Valley:

- Nurses, engineers, veterinarians, and first responders commute out of the neighborhood every day. In an emergency, their skills are right here.
- Chainsaws, generators, boats, camping gear, water filtration, and medical supplies are sitting in nearby garages and closets.
- Neighbors with language skills, local knowledge, or logistical experience can solve problems no agency could anticipate.

The problem is not a lack of resources. It's that, without a system, those resources stay invisible. People sit in their homes wondering what to do while the tools and skills they need are two streets away.

A WPV-Ready Node is a low-tech, back-up “social media” system for your neighborhood. It surfaces those hidden resources and connects them to where they are needed most — without power, internet, or cell service.

Our goal is a Node within a 15-minute walk of every resident in the WFPD service area. We are not there yet. Every neighborhood that establishes a Node moves us closer — and more importantly, makes that specific neighborhood dramatically more resilient when it matters most.

Before you do anything else — sign up for SMCAAlert.

SMCAAlert is the official source for evacuation orders and emergency alerts in San Mateo County. It is free, takes two minutes to set up, and is the single most important preparedness action you can take right now.

<https://SMCAAlert.info>

How Ready Nodes Work

A Ready Node is not a warehouse. It is not a command center. It is not staffed by professionals. It is a meeting place with a simple system for connecting people — run entirely by local volunteers.

When Does a Node Activate?

Safety first.

Your Ready Node activates after a major disruption — not during one. If there is an active disaster or evacuation order, your first priority is your own safety. Follow all evacuation orders immediately. Once you and your household are safe and the immediate danger has passed, your Ready Node is here to help coordinate recovery.

Activate your Node when both of the following are true:

- ☐ You have tended to your own household and immediate neighbors, AND
- ☐ Internet or cell service is down, or there is a major community disruption

The Four Stations

When a Node activates, it sets up four stations. In the “Classic Node Set-Up,” each has its own tent canopy. But Nodes are flexible by design — the number of tents and volunteers can expand or contract depending on who shows up. With just one or two volunteers, all four functions can run from a single tent or even a folding table. With a full crew, each station gets its own canopy and dedicated staff.

Nodes scale to what you have.

Two volunteers? One tent, one table, one set of forms — you can still run a fully functional Node. Ten volunteers? Spread out, assign dedicated roles, and handle high traffic. The Classic Set-Up is a starting point, not a requirement.

Visitors are directed to the station most relevant to their immediate need:

Information	Posts community bulletins on a whiteboard (e.g. “Tap water is unsafe” or “Red Cross shelter open at...”). Accepts messages for specific individuals. Tracks lost and found. Investigates questions and rumors.
Volunteers	Connects people who want to help with people who need help. Tracks offers of labor and specialized skills using the Posting Form system.
Supplies & Equipment	Helps neighbors lend, trade, or give items that solve local challenges. Note: the Node does NOT accept donated items — it connects people so they can make direct arrangements.

Education

Displays laminated posters on practical skills for extended outages: how to purify water, manage sanitation without sewer service, store medications without power, and care for animals.

Everyone who visits the Node is encouraged to browse all four stations after their immediate concern is addressed. A neighbor who came looking for help might realize they have supplies or skills that would help someone else.

Node Volunteers do not try to solve problems directly. They facilitate connections between people who have resources and people who need them. Everyone is potentially both a beneficiary and a benefactor.

The Posting Form

The Posting Form is the Node's core tool. Used at three of the four stations, it captures what a visitor needs or offers, and displays the key word visibly when posted in a hanging organizer. Forms stay at the Node. When a match is made between an offer and a need, the two forms are clipped together.

Each form records: the type of post (Bulletin, Question, Message, Heard That, Found/Lost, Volunteer, Supplies, Equipment), the visitor's contact information, and how to reach them if phones are not working. A date, time, and volunteer signature are added before posting.

The Seven Volunteer Roles

1. Node Manager	Maintains calm, supports volunteers, tracks significant decisions in a log, and serves as the primary liaison to CERT and WFPD. Directs Node shut-down at night or when unsafe.
2. Volunteer Coordinator	Matches people who want to help with people who need help. Recruits and signs in Node Volunteers during an activation.
3. Information Manager	Receives, verifies, and posts community bulletins and messages. Monitors AM/FM radio and NOAA weather radio for official updates.
4. Greeter	Welcomes visitors, listens to their concern, and directs them to the right station. Provides calm reassurance.
5. Supplies & Equipment Manager	Connects neighbors who have items to offer with those who need them. Tracks what is available and facilitates direct exchanges.
6. Educator	Helps visitors learn practical survival skills using laminated posters and whiteboards. Posts questions when specialized expertise is

	needed.
7. Floater	Provides additional capacity wherever lines are forming. Can help fill out Posting Forms and cover any station.

Node Equipment: The Node-in-a-Bag

A Ready Node is not about equipment — it's about relationships and improvisation. But having core supplies ready makes activation much faster.

The essential items — hanging organizers, Posting Forms, permanent markers, pens, binder clips — can fit in a duffel bag stored in a car trunk or closet. A whiteboard, tarp, and duct tape round out the basics.

WPV-Ready provides a Node-in-a-Bag.

Any neighborhood that completes Ready Node training and identifies its Node Volunteers will receive a Node-in-a-Bag from WPV-Ready at no cost. At least three Node Volunteers should each have one and agree to bring it to the Node's meeting spot after a disaster. Redundancy is critical.

Training dates and sign-up: <http://WPV-Ready.org>

Partnership with CERT

Ready Nodes and CERT teams have complementary roles — they are not the same thing, and both matter.

Function	CERT	Ready Node
Damage Assessment	Yes	No
Search & Rescue	Yes	No
First Aid	Yes	No
Organize Spontaneous Volunteers	No	Yes
Connect Needs and Offers (supplies & skills)	No	Yes
Educate (e.g. purify water, manage sanitation)	No	Yes

If a Node and a CERT command post are operating near each other, the Node can protect the CERT post from being overwhelmed by repeat questions and offers of help — a practical benefit for both.

How to Establish Your Node

Establishing a Ready Node takes some planning, but WPV-Ready will support you every step of the way. Here is the path:

Step 1: Contact WPV-Ready

Reach out and tell us you want to establish a Ready Node. We will work with you to identify your neighborhood's boundaries, find appropriate meeting spots, and connect you with training and materials.

Email: sbrown@woodsidefire.gov

Or call Selena Brown at 650-423-1406.

Step 2: Choose Your Node Location

Your Node's meeting spot should be:

- Outdoors. If buildings are unsafe after an earthquake or major event, an outdoor Node can get to work immediately.
- Known and promoted. Residents need to know in advance where to go. Location will be listed on an interactive map at www.WoodsideFire.org.
- Within a 15-minute walk of the homes it serves.

Common options include local parks, open spaces, church parking lots, or other outdoor areas with permission from the property owner.

Step 3: Form Your Core Group

Every Ready Node needs a Core Group of three to seven dedicated volunteers. This group determines the Node's meeting spot, arranges equipment storage, leads local outreach, and organizes practice events.

Core Group	Node Volunteers	Friends of the Node	General Public
Promotes the concept, sets up the location, recruits volunteers, organizes events.	Trained and ready to help run the Node during a disaster.	Neighbors or institutions that provide a location or other resources.	Educated to go to the Ready Node during a disaster.

Step 4: Complete Ready Node Training

WPV-Ready provides Ready Node training that covers the Classic Node Set-Up, the seven volunteer roles, how to use the Posting Form system, decision-making during an activation, and how to partner with CERT. Training is hands-on and includes a practice activation exercise.

Training dates are posted at woodsidefire.org and WPV-Ready.org. There is no cost.

Step 5: Receive Your Node-in-a-Bag and Hold a Practice Event

After training, WPV-Ready will provide your Core Group with a Node-in-a-Bag. Then, hold a practice activation — set up the stations, run through the roles, and walk through what a real activation would look like. Practice events are also great community outreach opportunities.

The “No Equipment Exercise”

Ask your team: if we had no pre-planned equipment, how would we run a Node? Blank paper becomes Posting Forms. A truck’s metal side becomes a posting board. A whiteboard laid flat in a trunk becomes a bulletin board. This exercise builds adaptability — the most important Node skill.

Step 6: Promote Your Node

For a Ready Node to work, residents need to know it exists before a disaster happens. Promotion is ongoing work:

- Tell neighbors where your Node meeting spot is and when they should go there
- Post information in your Ready Community communications and at neighborhood events
- Connect your Node location to the interactive map at WPV-Ready.org
- Hold regular practice events to keep volunteers sharp and introduce new neighbors

Research consistently shows that the critical factor in saving lives during a disaster is the amount of social connection in a neighborhood before the disaster strikes. Your Core Group is building those connections right now.

Building the Foundation: Your Ready Community

A WPV-Ready Node depends on a neighborhood that is already organized and connected. That is what a Ready Community provides: a network of neighbors who know each other, have shared information, and have started talking about preparedness before a disaster strikes.

Think of the Ready Community as the social infrastructure your Node runs on. The stronger the community connections before a disaster, the more effectively the Node will function during one.

Three Steps to a Ready Community

- **Define the Community:** Register at [WPV-Ready.org](http://wpv-ready.org), then contact the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator to describe the streets or area you want to organize. We will help you identify addresses and produce a map.

Register: <http://wpv-ready.org/Registration>

- **Connect Your Neighbors:** Visit neighbors, distribute introductory handouts, and collect basic information using the Resident Info form. Your goal is to know who is in your community, how to reach them, who has skills, and who may need extra support in an emergency.

Resident Info form: <https://WPV-Ready.org/MyInfo>

- **Talk, Share, and Prepare:** Start conversations — on the street, at their door, or at a neighborhood gathering. Engage people in small, practical steps. This is also how you will recruit your Node's Core Group and Node Volunteers.

Handouts to Share

- *Emergency Preparedness Jump Start*
- *Emergency Preparedness – The Checklist*
- *Basics of Preparedness – Stay Informed*
- *WPV-Ready and WPV-CERT – an Introduction*

Download all handouts: <http://WPV-Ready.org/Learn/Downloads>

Pre-printed, professional versions are also available — just ask us.

Don't be discouraged if only a few people respond at first. Outreach professionals estimate it takes five or more contacts before someone notices you. Little by little, one neighbor at a time, you will build the connections your Node depends on.

WPV-Ready Communicators and ReadyNet

Your Ready Node does not operate in isolation. One of the most critical connections it has during a disaster is to the WPV-Ready Communicator network.

What Is a Ready Communicator?

WPV-Ready Communicators are citizen volunteers trained to use their own GMRS two-way radios to communicate with WPV-CERT and WFPD when cell phones and internet are down. They serve as communication gateways between your neighborhood Node and the fire district.

During a disaster, one or more Ready Communicators may be present at or near your Ready Node. The Node Manager can relay urgent needs — medical assistance, search and rescue requests, hazard reports — through a Ready Communicator when no other channel is available.

The ReadyNet Radio System

ReadyNet is a system of linked GMRS radio repeaters that cover the WFPD service area. There are two main repeaters:

- WD1 (Channel 1) — at the Easter Cross in Emerald Hills
- PV1 (Channel 3) — in central Portola Valley

These repeaters are linked — a transmission on WD1 is simultaneously heard by anyone tuned to PV1, and vice versa. Ready Communicators choose whichever gives them the strongest signal based on terrain and line of sight.

Become a Ready Communicator

No radio experience is required. A GMRS license from the FCC costs \$35 for 10 years, requires no test, and covers your entire immediate family. WPV-Ready provides all training.

Having even one or two Ready Communicators in your neighborhood significantly strengthens your Node. If you are recruiting for your Core Group, Ready Communicators are an ideal addition.

Training dates and information: <http://WPV-Ready.org>

Resources

Questions? Contact your Emergency Preparedness Coordinator:**Selena Brown • 650-423-1406 • sbrown@woodsidefire.gov**Message us online: <http://WPV-Ready.org/My-Profile/Messages>

(Select “Emergency Preparedness Coordinator” from the list)

- Downloads — handouts you can print or request as pre-printed sets

<http://WPV-Ready.org/Learn/Downloads>

- Ready Assessment — assess your general preparedness (earthquake, wildfire, severe storm)

<http://WPV-Ready.org/My-Profile/Ready-Assessment>

- Firewise Assessment — assess wildfire preparedness per the Firewise USA program

<http://WPV-Ready.org/My-Profile/Firewise-Assessment>

- Resident Information Form — update your household’s status, needs, and abilities annually

Online: <https://WPV-Ready.org/MyInfo>

- Messages Tool — Community Leaders can message all registered neighbors in their area

<http://WPV-Ready.org/My-Profile/Messages>

- District Discussion Group — connect with neighbors across the district

<http://WPV-Ready.groups.io>

- Social Media — follow WPV-Ready for updates and preparedness tips

<http://WPV-Ready.org/Connect/Social>

- WPV-CERT — our sister organization; trained volunteers who respond when emergencies happen

<http://WPV-CERT.org>

Projects and Activities

Below are activities to consider as you build your Ready Community and Node. Each one strengthens your neighborhood's resilience.

Priority activities for Node development:

- Identify your Core Group of three to seven volunteers
- Choose your Node meeting spot and make arrangements with any property owner
- Complete Ready Node training and hold a practice activation
- Promote your Node location throughout your neighborhood
- Recruit Ready Communicator volunteers

Community Preparedness Activities

- Join the Firewise USA program to reduce neighborhood wildfire risk

<http://WPV-Ready.org/Firewise>

- Get neighbors to complete online preparedness assessments — start with a few, add more over time

<http://WPV-Ready.org/My-Profile/Ready-Assessment>

- Pick one assessment finding and tackle it as a community project. Host a potluck around it — we can come present.
- Have a “Plan Party”: neighbors build household emergency plans together (evacuation meeting spots, out-of-area contacts, food and water storage)
- Maintain a community map showing homes, evacuation routes, and above-ground power lines
- Keep a phone tree or walking team to personally confirm evacuation warnings reach every household

You cannot get fully prepared all at once. Success comes from a team working on one simple task at a time over the course of years. Every step makes a difference.

In Conclusion – Let's Get Started!

Establishing a WPV-Ready Node in your neighborhood may be one of the most meaningful things you do for the people around you. When the systems we depend on fail, your Node will be the place neighbors turn. It will be there because you built it, before it was needed.

WPV-Ready, our towns, our fire department, and many dedicated volunteers are here to support you every step of the way. You do not need to be an expert. You need to be a neighbor who cares.

Reach out and let's get started.

Contact Selena Brown, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

650-423-1406 • organize@wpv-ready.org

WPV-Ready.org

Terms We Use

WPV-Ready Node

A neighborhood emergency post that activates after a major disruption to help neighbors connect, share skills and supplies, and coordinate recovery without depending on technology. The central program described in this guide.

Core Group

Three to seven dedicated volunteers who establish and sustain a Ready Node: determining the meeting spot, arranging equipment storage, leading outreach, and organizing practice events.

Node Volunteers

Trained volunteers ready to help run a Ready Node during a disaster. They fill the seven roles described in this guide.

Ready Community

An organized group of neighbors within the WPV-Ready program, connected through a Community Leader. The social foundation that a Ready Node depends on.

Community Leader (CL)

A local volunteer who organizes a Ready Community and keeps it running. If there is no Ready Community in your neighborhood, contact us to become the first.

WPV-Ready Communicator

A citizen volunteer trained to use a GMRS two-way radio to communicate with WPV-CERT and WFPD during emergencies when other systems are down. A critical link between your Node and the fire district.

ReadyNet

A system of linked GMRS radio repeaters (WD1 and PV1) used by WPV-CERT and Ready Communicators to communicate across the fire district during emergencies.

WPV-Ready

The Emergency Preparedness program covering the WFPD service area, operated by EPiC, Inc. and funded by the Towns of Woodside and Portola Valley and the WFPD.

<http://WPV-Ready.org>

WPV-CERT

Community Emergency Response Team. Trained volunteers who respond to local emergencies when professional services are overwhelmed. A registered FEMA CERT program.

<http://WPV-CERT.org>

WFPD

Woodside Fire Protection District. Our fire department, covering the Towns of Woodside and Portola Valley plus unincorporated areas of San Mateo County.

<http://WoodsideFire.org>

Firewise USA®

A National Fire Protection Association program providing a framework for communities to reduce their vulnerability to wildfire.

<http://WPV-Ready.org/Firewise>

SMCAAlert

The most important source of emergency alerts in our fire district — evacuation orders, warnings, and official notifications from San Mateo County. Sign up now if you have not already.

<https://SMCAAlert.info>

EPiC, Inc.

Emergency Preparedness in Communities, Inc. A nonprofit that operates WPV-Ready and WPV-CERT within the Woodside Fire Protection District.

Sample Introduction Letter

Dear Neighbor,

I'm writing to introduce myself and to invite you to be part of something that could make a real difference for our neighborhood in an emergency.

I am working to establish a WPV-Ready Node for our area. A Ready Node is a low-tech neighborhood post — a pre-established meeting spot where neighbors can gather after a major disaster when cell phones, internet, and other normal systems may be down. At the Node, we share information, connect people who need help with people who can provide it, and coordinate as a community rather than struggling alone.

Nodes are run entirely by local volunteers. They don't require any special equipment or expertise to participate. They just require neighbors who know where to go and are willing to show up.

WPV-Ready, our district-wide Emergency Preparedness program, supports Ready Nodes throughout the Woodside Fire Protection District — covering Woodside, Portola Valley, and surrounding unincorporated communities including Vista Verde, Los Trancos Woods, Ladera, Skyline, and Emerald Hills.

If you are interested in learning more, please reach out. And make sure you are signed up for San Mateo County's emergency alert system — it is free and takes two minutes.

SMCAAlert: <http://SMCAAlert.info>

WPV-Ready: <https://wpv-ready.org/Registration>

I hope you will join us. You can reach me, _____, by _____.

Best,