

**February 2023**

Update from “Storm Central.”

Are you ready for the winter storms? If your home floods, what will you do? If you lose power, are you ready to be without for a few days? When your neighbor asks for help with fallen branches, are you able to do so safely?

As 50-plus-mph winds and downpours of up to six inches per hour pummeled our community in early January, our 9-1-1 system was overwhelmed. Effective response to the significant flooding, mudslides, medical, and other incidents required more work than our local agencies were initially able to handle. At the storms’ peak, Woodside Fire responded to more than 85 incidents in a 24-hour period -- likely a record in its nearly 100-year history.

### **How Did We Get Through It?**

The good news: a growing number of community residents were trained and ready to get through the storms *safely and then to help those who needed it*. This gave some breathing space to the professionals, who were overwhelmed during the storms’ first days. These residents, trained in the Community Emergency Response Team program (or CERT), worked with people throughout the district, providing sandbags and helping with residential flooding, downed trees and electrical lines, and more.

These trained residents, known as CERTs, used our emergency communications network, what we call the “CERT net,” leveraging our community’s investment in hand-held UHF, digital, and amateur (HAM) radios to report any problems and the progress in fixing them. The town volunteers on Portola Valley ‘s Public Works Committee helped keep roads clear and pull debris from culverts. All this was coordinated with the public works departments of Woodside and Portola Valley and Woodside Fire.

In some cases, these trained residents were the only responders available. In some disasters, like this recent storm system, or a major earthquake, residents – all of you – are the first responders, particularly when the system of professional responders is overwhelmed. In a major disaster, when the county’s emergency services will prioritize larger towns, we may be on our own for up to two weeks.

### **Your Communities Need You**

Please join the small, dedicated group of residents from around the fire district – Woodside, Portola Valley, Emerald Hills, Ladera, Los Trancos Woods, Skyline, and Vista Verde – who have been trained to safely help others. Here are some options:

**Basic Preparedness for Everyone:** [WPV-Ready](#)



Start with basics of personal, home, and neighborhood preparedness through the [WPV-Ready](#) program. It helps you prepare household emergency and evacuation plans, as well as planning for pets and people with special needs. It encourages neighbors to work together to identify and develop plans to mitigate special risks in your neighborhoods. Please register today to get access to tools to make it simple to be better prepared. <https://wpv-ready.org/Registration>

### **Community Emergency Response Team Training: [WPV-CERT](#)**

For a higher level of training and commitment, the [WPV-CERT](#) program follows the FEMA-based Community Emergency Response Team curriculum to build an effective response team that may be deployed where needed, as it was so effectively during our winter storms this year.



### **How to Get Started**

Get to know your neighbors. With them, take the basic training. Register on the [WPV-Ready](#) website to connect with other community leaders.

### **We Need Your Help to Help You**

We need people who can help gather people together. How? Creating social media content, writing short newsy notices to the community, staffing our info tables at events, and revising and updating our training slides.



### **We've Changed Our Name: We are EPiC**

EPiC for Emergency Preparedness in Communities is the new name of the district-wide 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation CERPP. Our Board of Directors thought it was time to lighten things up and showcase the organization's evolution. Also it was a problem that CERPP rhymed with CERT, and the spelled-out name never fit on forms. Bonus: EPiC means something very positive, whereas CERPP was "just an acronym."

EPiC is funded by the Woodside Fire Protection District, the Town of Woodside, the Town of Portola Valley, and supplemented by grants and private fundraising. It is overseen by a Board of Directors made up of residents, town managers, retired and current fire chiefs, and residents of neighboring communities. Selena Brown, WFPD Public Education Officer and Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, serves as EPiC's president.

## **We are All in this Together**

We are proud of our community emergency response program, which at its founding in 1997 was the first of its kind in San Mateo County to train and prepare residents to do their part in a widespread disaster.

This year's winter storms showcased the way our trained residents made a significant difference in the response to and recovery from a widespread disaster. This was a coordinated effort in which trained residents were a key component of the overall response, working with our local agencies as well as the San Mateo County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Thank you to all who helped. Please consider joining us to be ready next time.

**Selena Brown**  
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**EPiC**

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