

HOW TO START A RAPID RESPONSE NETWORK WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS

A Step-by-Step Guide for Building Community Connection and Resilience



**START THE
CONVERSATION**



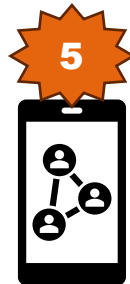
**AGREE ON WHAT
YOU'LL RESPOND TO**



**DECIDE SIMPLE
ROLES**



**MAP YOUR
NETWORK**



**SET UP YOUR
ALERT SYSTEM**



**BUILD YOUR LOCAL
RESOURCE LIST**

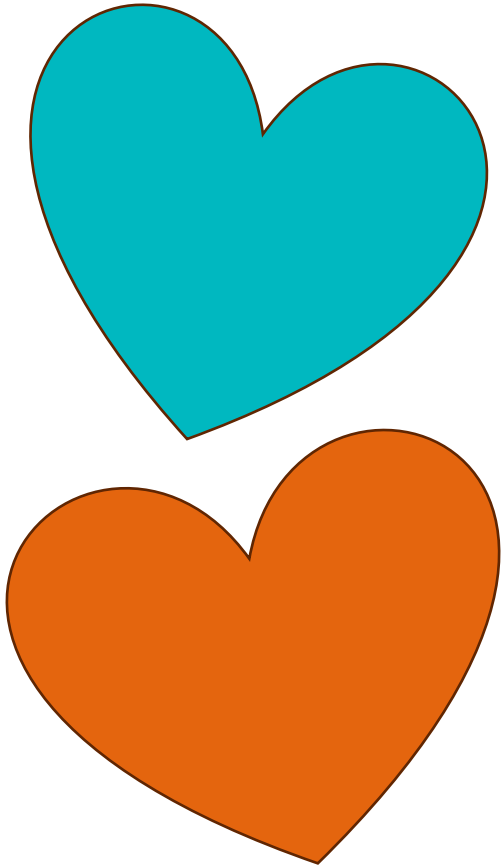


**PRACTICE BEFORE
YOU NEED IT**



KEEP IT GOING

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

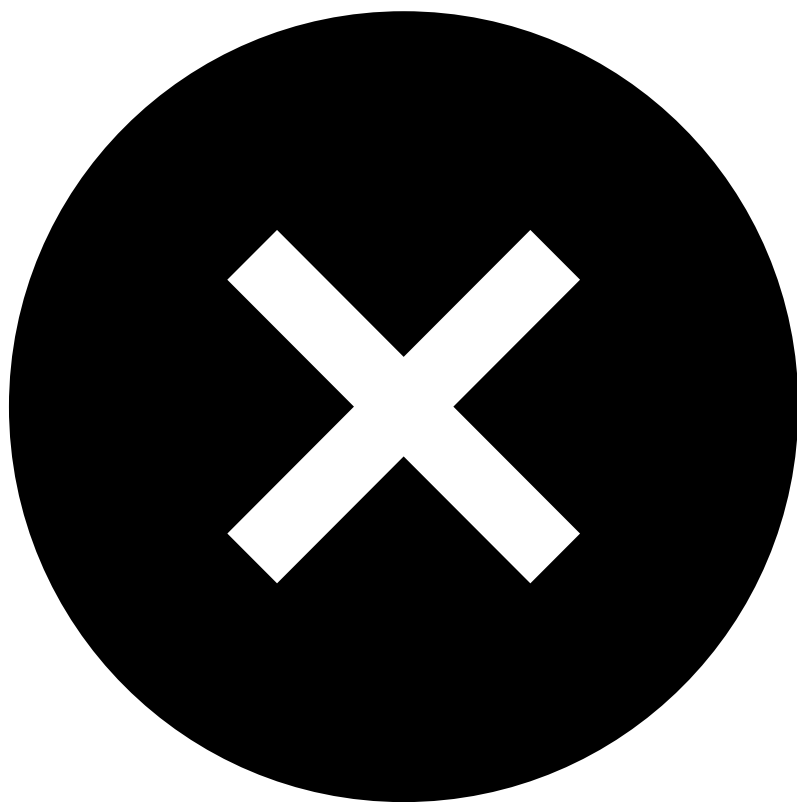


This toolkit is designed to help you build an organized group of neighbors who agree to show up — fast — when a neighbor needs help.

It's the people on your block, or a floor in your apartment building – small scale and nimble. It's about mobilizing when there is a need, such as checking in on vulnerable neighbors during a weather emergency, helping someone facing an eviction notice, or mobilizing together in the event of a lost child, a medical crisis, harassment or natural disaster.

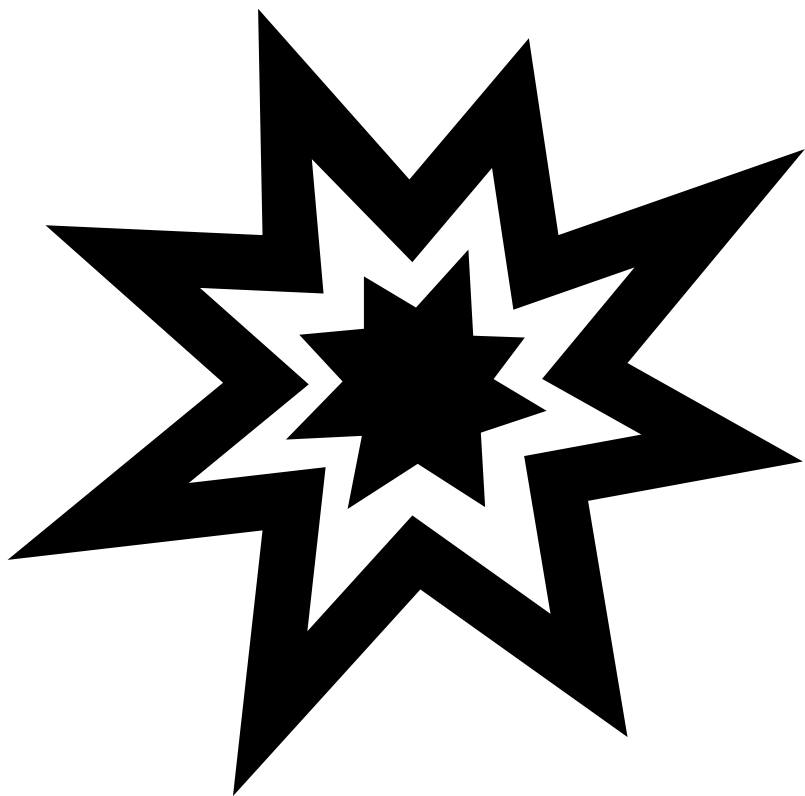
It's about building a resilient, connected community among the people who live nearby.

WHAT THIS IS NOT



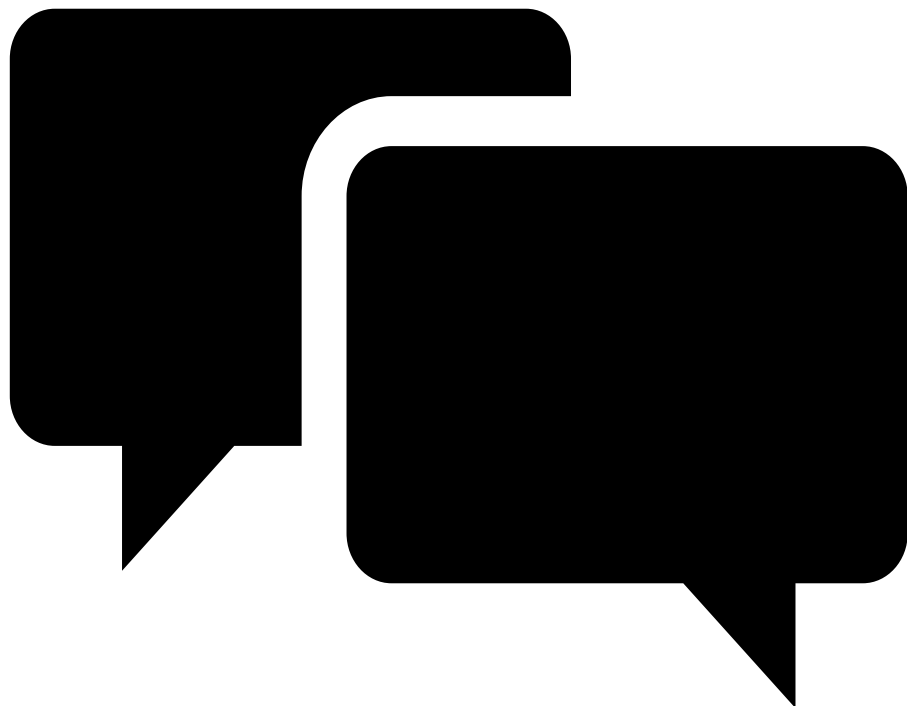
- This is not for forming a Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET). Portland's NET program provides rigorous training to equip people neighborhood-wide to act as first responders in the event of a disaster.
- This is not a how-to for starting a mutual aid network, although your organizing efforts could lead to one!
- And this guide isn't geared toward protecting our immigrant neighbors. Experts are already providing excellent tools and trainings for that.
- **TIP: THIS TOOLKIT COMPLIMENTS THE WORK OF THE NETWORKS ABOVE. START SMALL AND BE ASPIRATIONAL!**

QUICK TIPS!



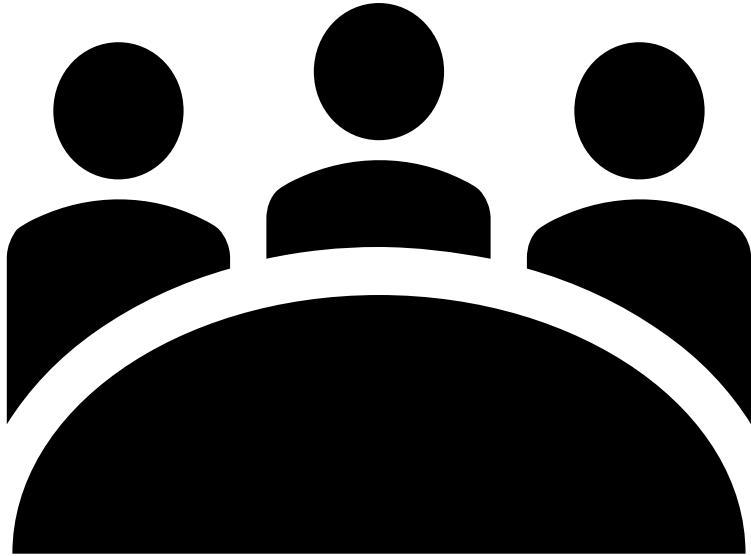
- ➔ **KEEP IT SIMPLE.** A text thread or phone tree and a few willing neighbors is enough to start.
- ➔ **RECOGNIZE THAT TRUST IS BUILT OVER TIME.** Show up for small things before big ones.
- ➔ **RESPECT PRIVACY.** Not every neighbor will want to join — and that's okay.
- ➔ **DOCUMENT WHAT YOU DO.** Notes will help when things move fast.

STEP 1: START THE CONVERSATION



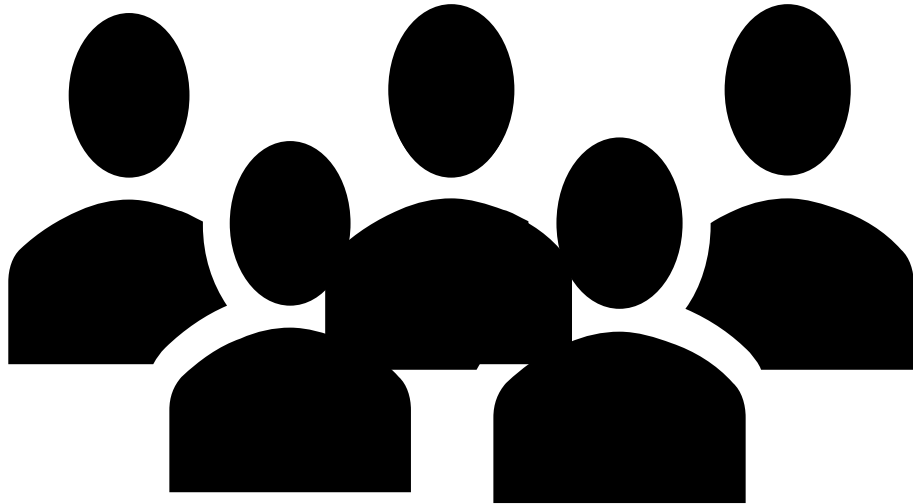
- **Talk to 2–3 trusted neighbors first before doing anything formal.**
- **Find people who are already connected — parents, longtime residents, block captains.**
- **Walk your block and introduce yourself to people you don't know. Ask: "Would you show up if a neighbor needed us?"**
- **TIP: DON'T WAIT FOR A CRISIS TO BEGIN ORGANIZING!**

STEP 2: AGREE ON WHAT YOU'LL RESPOND TO



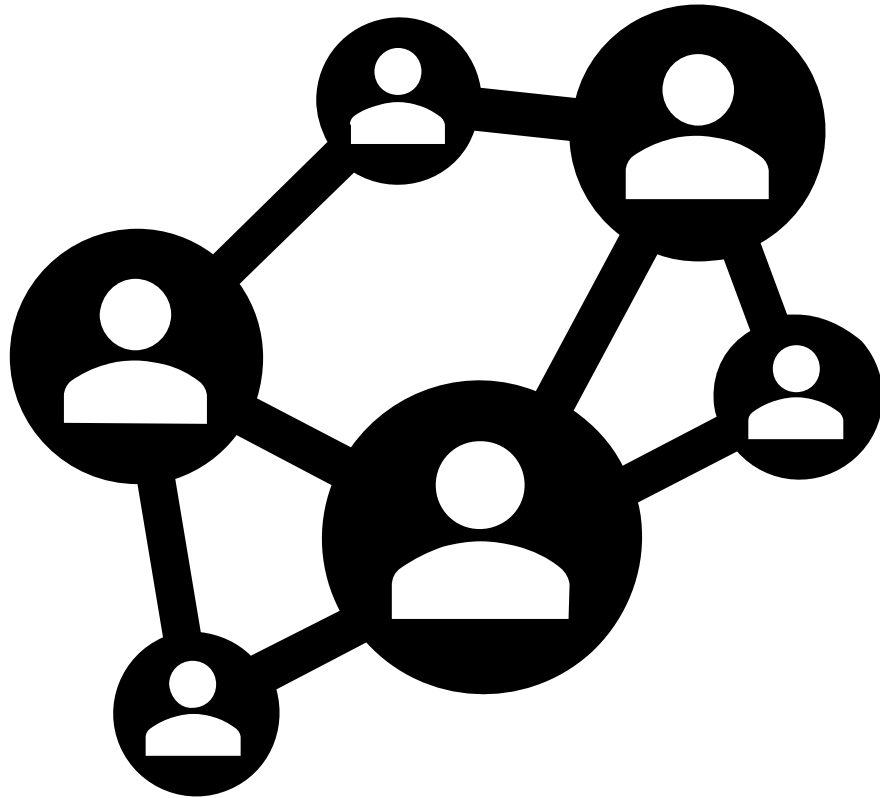
- **Hold a short meeting (even 30 minutes works) to decide your focus.**
- **Common examples: weather emergencies, medical crisis, eviction threats, hate incidents, a lost child or pet.**
- **Be honest about your limits — you don't have to do everything. Start small.**
- **TIP: WRITE IT DOWN IN PLAIN LANGUAGE SO EVERYONE IS ON THE SAME PAGE.**

STEP 3: DECIDE SIMPLE ROLES



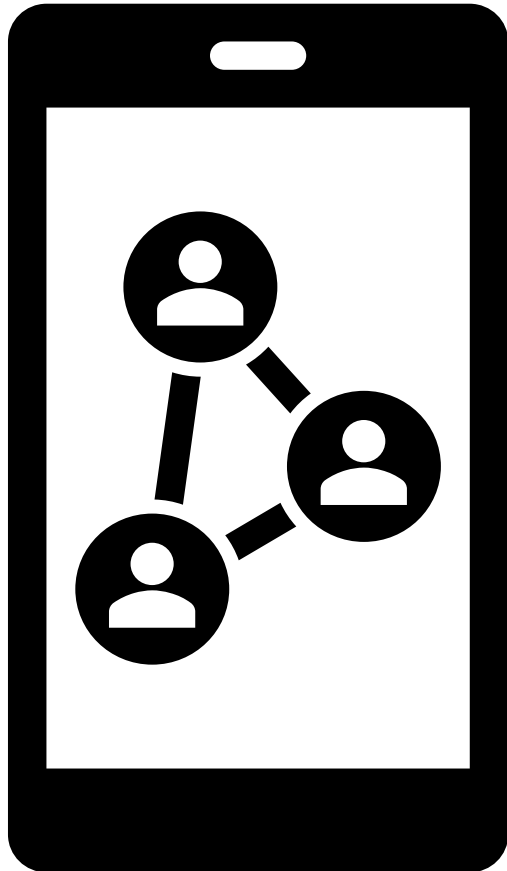
- **Coordinator** — sends alerts, tracks who's responding.
- **First responders** — 3–5 people who commit to showing up quickly.
- **Support team** — helps with food, childcare, phone calls, logistics.
- **Connector** — knows local resources (legal aid, food banks, shelters).
- **TIP: ROLES CAN ROTATE — NO ONE SHOULD BURN OUT!**

STEP 4: MAP YOUR NETWORK



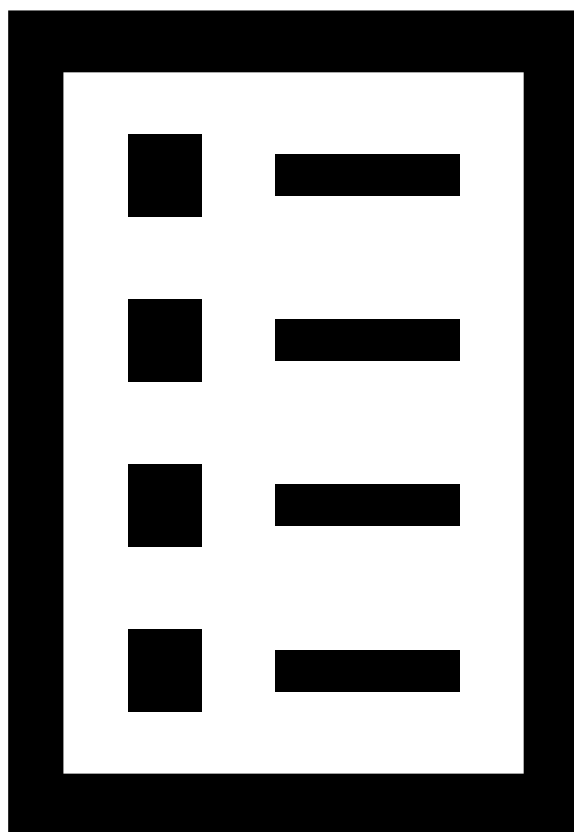
- **Make a simple printed contact list to share: name, phone, address, languages spoken.**
- **Co-create a list of skills and resources among your network, such as: Who has a truck? A generator? Jumper cables? Owns a pet? Has medical training? Is a carpenter? Grows food? Is a translator? Has a special need?**
- **TIP: ALWAYS GET PERMISSION BEFORE ADDING ANYONE OR ANYTHING — CONSENT IS CRITICAL!**

STEP 5: SET UP YOUR ALERT SYSTEM



- Agree to **ONE** main channel that everyone will actually check such as a phone tree, text thread, or door knock. *Don't let technology be a barrier to participation.*
- Have a backup plan in case the power is out or cell service is down.
- Establish a simple alert format: Who needs help / What's happening / Where / What's needed.
- Designate a point person (and backup) to send alerts so messages don't get confusing.
- **TIP: TEST YOUR SYSTEM BEFORE A REAL CRISIS!**

STEP 6: BUILD YOUR LOCAL RESOURCE LIST



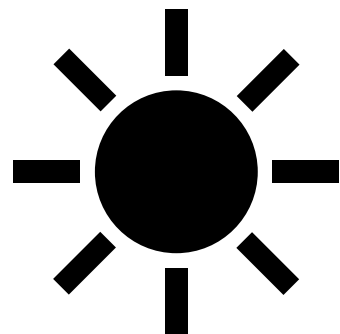
- City and county services and emergency contacts.
- Local legal aid, tenant and immigrant rights organizations.
- Food pantries and emergency supplies.
- Mental health and crisis lines.
- Training opportunities for building skills.
- **TIP: KEEP THE LIST CURRENT AND SHARE IT WITH YOUR NETWORK.**

STEP 7: PRACTICE BEFORE YOU NEED IT



- Do a dry run — send a test alert and see who responds.
- Hold casual gatherings so neighbors get to know each other's faces.
- Debrief after any real response: What worked? What didn't?
- **TIP: CELEBRATE SHOWING UP — EVEN SMALL ACTIONS MATTER!**

STEP 8: KEEP IT GOING!



- Check in with your network regularly, even if nothing has happened.
- Welcome new neighbors into the group.
- Rotate leadership so it doesn't fall on one person.
- Share lessons and this guide with others so they can start a rapid response network among their neighbors.
- **TIP: REMIND EACH OTHER WHY YOU STARTED. BUILDING COMMUNITY TAKES TENDING AND IT MOVES AT THE SPEED OF TRUST.**